The Ornament of Clear Realization:

A Commentary on the Prajnaparamita of the Maitreya Buddha



Thrangu Rinpoche

The Ornament of Clear Realization

One of the Five Works of Maitreya

The Ornament of Clear Realization:

Teachings on the Prajnaparamita of the Next Buddha, Maitreya

(Skt. Abhisamayalankara-prajnaparamita-upadesha-shastra)

A Commentary by

Thrangu Rinpoche

Geshe Lharampa

Oral Translation by
Ken and Katia Holmes

Final Translation by
Dr. Cornelia Weishaar-Günter

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1390 Kalmia Avenue
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Tel. (303) 449-6608
Visit Rinpoche's Web site: www.rinpoche.com

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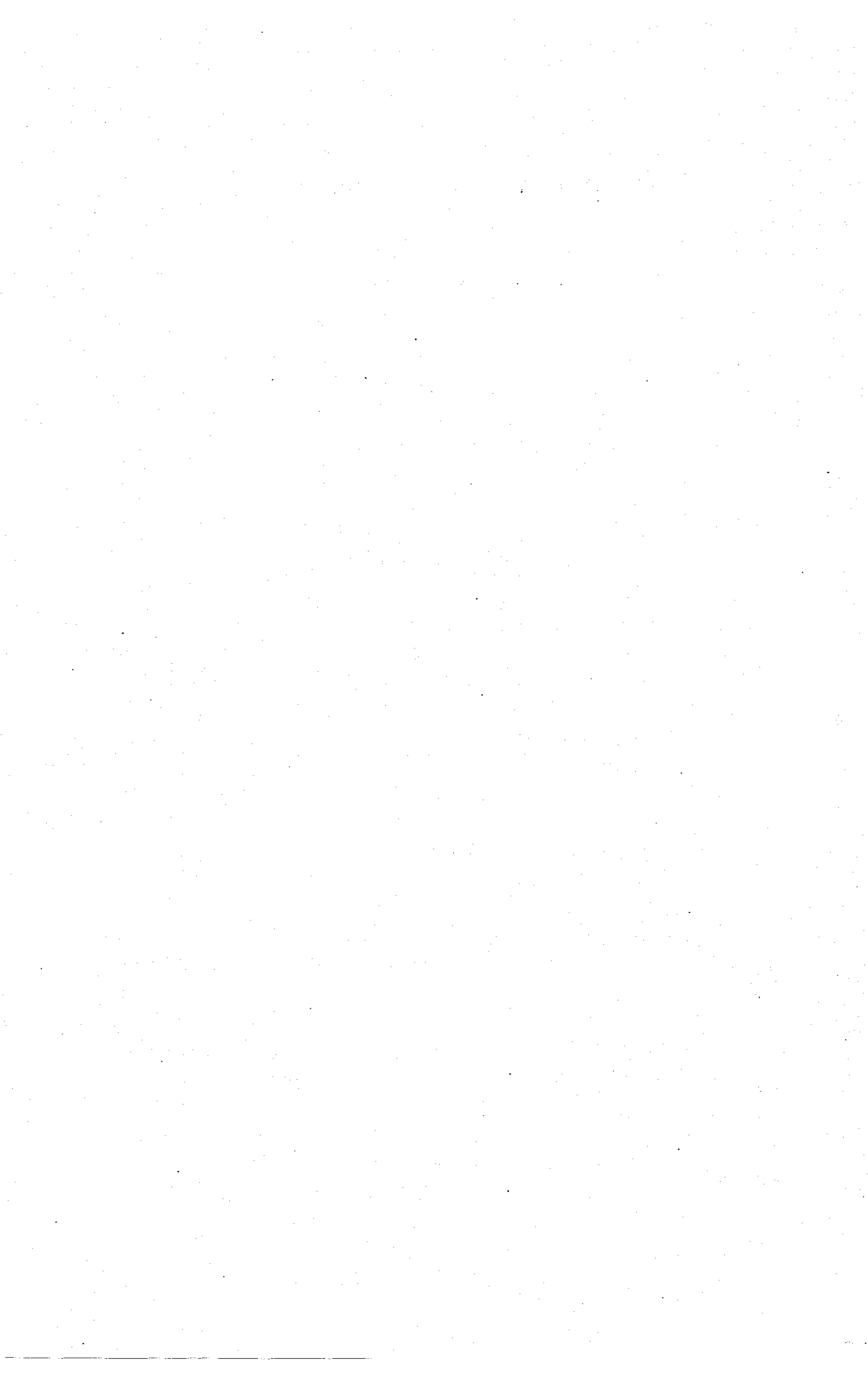
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Notes

We use the convention of B.C.E. (Before Current Era) for "B. C." and C.E. (Current Era) for "A. D."

Technical words are italicized the first time that they are used to alert the reader that they may be found in the Glossary of Terms.

Tibetan words (except for the outline) are given as they are pronounced, not spelled in Tibetan. Their actual spelling can be found in the Glossary of Tibetan Terms.



A Summary of the Topics with Tibetan Names of Topics

Table 1

The Five Works of Maitreya

1. *The Ornament of Mahayana Discourses* (Skt. *mahayana-sutra-lamkara*, Tib. *theg pa chen po mdo sde rgyan*). This work consists of twenty-one chapters and is written in verse. It covers a discussion of Buddha-nature, refuge in the three jewels, the mahayana paths, and the doctrine of emptiness.
2. *The Ornament of Clear Realization* (Skt. *abhisamayalamkara*, Tib. *mngon rtogs rgyan*). This work is a verse commentary on the Prajnaparamita literature (which comes in the 100,000 and in 25,000, and in 8,000 verses) and like that literature is divided into eight vajra topics. This text is studied in all four Tibetan lineages and is used in the study of the sutra system.
3. *Distinguishing the Middle from the Extremes* (Skt. *madhyantavibhaga*, Tib. *dbus mtha' rnam 'byed*). This work is a commentary expounding primarily on the Chittamatra school of Buddhism, especially the Shentong school. The text explores eternalism and nihilism and why these are not part of the middle way.
4. *Distinguishing Dharma and Dharmata* (Skt. *dharma-dharmata-vibhaga*, Tib. *chos dang chos nyid rnam 'byed*). This is a commentary on the tathagatagarbha doctrine and the Chittamatra school of thought.
5. *The Uttara Tantra* (Skt. *uttaratantra shastra*, Tib. *rgyud bla ma*). This work is written in verse and has seven vajra points. It is mainly a commentary on the three jewels, the seed of Buddha-nature which is inherent in all sentient beings, and the attributes and activities of the Buddha. It particularly deals with the subject of Buddha-nature and the development of the realization of the nature of phenomena through the purification of the disturbing emotions.

Foreword

About two thousand five hundred years ago the Buddha attained enlightenment and began delivering a remarkable set of teachings at the age of thirty-five. His first teaching was that all beings seek happiness, but that they do not achieve a state of permanent happiness because of their attachment to objects.

These are, of course, the teachings of the Four Noble truths which was a formal discourse to five of his disciples which laid down the fundamentals of the Buddhist path. For the next forty-five years the Buddha taught much differently; he would usually meet in a large gathering and then he would accept questions and answer these questions. His answers varied depending on the capacity and understanding of who asked the question and the answer was specific to that particular individuals needs. When the Buddhist teachings were collected together after his passing away, his students made a collection of discourses which were essentially question and answers to individuals questions and were not organized in any systematic way. These teachings called the sutras fill over 30 volumes and it was difficult for the average Buddhist to extract the essential meaning from these discourses.

As a result of this some enlightened individuals in later centuries studied these sutras and meditated upon them for a long time and then wrote very carefully written commentaries or shastras which organized these sutras into basic themes. Thrangu Rinpoche emphasizes that the authors of the shastras did not expressed their personal theories and beliefs as university professors do today, but they were extraordinary individuals who received transmissions from supermundane sources. This may seem far-fetched to the western scholar, but anyone who has spent any time with Buddhist lamas knows that this communication goes on even today with the most realized lamas.

In the fourth century C.E. there were a pair of remarkable brothers who lived in India. The younger brother Vasubandhu spent years studying under the great gurus in India and Kashmir and upon reaching enlightenment wrote an extraordinary shastra on the

Abhidharma called the *Abhidharmakosha.* The Abhidharma, to greatly simplify, is the Buddhist cosmology and classification of knowledge which tries to systematize the dharma in a highly structured set of concepts. This book written in Sanskrit was almost lost with the Moslem invasion of India in the eleventh century, but was fortunately copied, and taken to Nepal and Tibet and translated into Tibetan. There it remained essentially unchanged from the ninth century on to today where it is still studied by all Tibetan sects in their monastic colleges. This work is classified as a major work of the hinayana school.

The older brother, Asanga was even more remarkable. Asanga spent a period of twelve years meditating on Maitreya who was an original disciple of the Buddha who achieved such high spiritual achievement that Maitreya dwells in the sambhogakaya. After these twelve years, which involved many trials, Asanga was able to "meet" with Maitreya. To be able to contact the sambhogakaya requires an extraordinarily pure and realized being. From Maitreya Asanga was able to receive the transmission of five shastras. These shastras were: *The Uttara Tantra* which is a treatise on Buddha-nature. When Thrangu Rinpoche first came to the West he chose this as his first text to teach to Westerners. This teaching is now available from Namo Buddha Publications.

The second treatise is the *Abhisamaya-lankara* which is this particular text on the vast Prajnaparamita teachings. The third treatise is the *Madhyanta-vibhaga* or *Distinguishing the Middle from the Extremes.* This text describes expands on the tenets of the Middle-way school. This teaching of Maitreya was also taught by Thrangu Rinpoche and is available from Namo Buddha Publications. The fourth treatise is the *Dharma-dharmata-vibhaga* or *Distinguishing Dharma and Dharmata.* This work also discusses Buddha-nature and is available from Namo Buddha Publications. Finally, there is the *Mahayana-sutra-lankara* or the *Ornament of the Mahayana Sutras.*

The Buddha taught three paths or three vehicles. The first path is the hinayana which stresses to generalize greatly the examination of mind through meditation and the accumulation of merit. The accomplished practitioner of this path is called an arhat. The second vehicle is the mahayana path which includes everything in the

hinayana vehicle with a special emphasis on the concept of emptiness of phenomena and the emptiness of self. The accomlished person of this path is called a bodhisattva. The concept of emptiness is the Prajnaparamita teachings. So we can see that this commentary on the *Abhisamayalankara* is one of the foundations for the mahayana teachings. This is why this text as well as the other four texts of Maitreya are taught throughout Tibet and among all sects of Tibetan Buddhism.

The *Ornament of Clear Realization* summarizes the vast Prajnaparamita text of 100,000 verses. This Prajnaparamita text along with its shorter versions of 25,000 and 8,000 verses came from the great tantric practitioner Nagajuna who lived in the first century of our era. The *Ornament* comprises 80 distinct points and these points are memorized in Tibetan monastic colleges (shedras) and are an integral part of a Buddhist education. For this reason we have included each of these points and their Tibetan names in the extensive outline of this work.

Unfortunately, the root text of the *Ornament* has been translated only a few times into English. We are now preparing a text of this commentary with a translation of the root text. The root text is for the most part simply long lists of words (very similar to the 80 points) and this makes the root text without a commentary fairly incomprehensible. We are especially fortunate to have the great scholar Thrangu Rinpoche commentary on this important work.

Clark Johnson, Ph. D.

The Five Paths

(Skt. *panca marga*, Tib. *lam lnga*)

These five paths are referred to many times in The Ornament of Clear Realization

1. Path of accumulation (Skt. *sambhara-marga*, Tib. *chogs lam*)

On this path the practitioner practices the four foundations of mindfulness and practices what to adopt and what to reject.

2.Path of Preparation (Skt. *prayoga-marga*, Tib. *sbyor lam*)

On this path, also called the path of unification, the practitioner develops a profound insight into the Four Noble Truths and cuts the root to the desire realm.

3. Path of Insight (Skt. *darsana-marga*, Tit. *mthong lam*)

On this path, also called the path of seeing, the practitioner realizes the Four Noble Truths and enters into the first bodhisattva level which is realizing the emptiness of phenomena.

4. Path of Cultivation (Skt. *bhavana-marga*, Tib. *sgom lam*)

On this path, also called the path of meditation because the Tibetan word *sgom* means meditation. In this path the practitioner continues the insight of the path of insight and begins to enter the second through ninth bodhisattva levels.

5. Path of No-more-learning (Skt. *ashaiksha-marga*, Tib. *mi slob pa'i lam*)

On this path, also called the path of fulfillment (Skt. *nishtha-marga*), the practitioner attains complete meditation or samadhi and attains Buddhahood.

Chapter 1

An Introduction to the Prajnaparamita

The Buddha taught in three main phases which we call the three turnings of the *wheel of dharma*.[2] The first turning of the wheel of dharma took place in Varanasi which we now call Benares. In these first teachings the Buddha taught the *four noble truths:* the truth of suffering, the truth of the origination of suffering, the truth of the cessation of suffering, and the truth of the path which leads to the cessation of suffering. By accustoming ourselves to these truths by meditating upon these four truths, we can achieve the state of a *shravaka* or a *pratyekabuddha*, who are individuals who achieve the fruition of the *hinayana*. In the third turning of the wheel of dharma the Buddha taught on *Buddha-nature* or Buddha-essence which is present in all beings.

These teachings on the Prajnaparamita, however, belong to the second turning of the wheel of dharma. The principal topic of this second turning is the exploration of voidness or emptiness[3] of phenomena and these teachings were mainly taught at Vulture Peak mountain which to this day can be visited at Rajagriha in India.

The Buddha taught the Prajnaparamita very extensively. He taught it in depth in a text called the one hundred thousand verses, in an intermediate text called the twenty-five thousand verses, and in a concise text called the eight thousand verses. These teachings on the Prajnaparamita also exist in an extremely concise and pithy form which is called the *The Heart Sutra* which is often chanted each day in mahayana Buddhist centers. Finally, these teachings can be summed up in an even shorter form by the mantra of the Prajnaparamita which is OM GATE GATE PARGATE PARA-SAMGATE SOHA and in its most concise form in the Tibetan letter AH.

The Two Approaches to the Prajnaparamita

There are two main ways of approaching the meaning of the Prajnaparamita. The first is a direct exposition of the meaning of emptiness and second is the indirect exposition of revealing the hidden meaning of emptiness by discussing the paths and the spiritual levels. Within the direct exposition of the nature of emptiness, we are dealing with the understanding of emptiness which is the principal concern of the practice of a *bodhisattva*. In a more detailed method, if we approach it in an analytical way, one can examine the sixteen aspects of emptiness[4] which are, for example, the emptiness of externals, the emptiness of internals, the emptiness of externals and internals together. Another direct approach is to examine emptiness in terms of the *relative level* and from the *ultimate level*.

The indirect exposition of emptiness is to approach emptiness by studying spiritual progress on the *five paths* and the ten *bodhisattva levels*. The five paths are: the path of accumulation, the path of junction, the path of insight, the path of cultivation, and the path of no more learning. By examining of these five paths we can begin to understand emptiness. We also contemplate what takes place on each of these five paths in terms of a gradual increase in wisdom (Skt. *prajna*). We begin with wisdom based on simply hearing the teachings. This then leads to the wisdom which comes from contemplation of what we learned through study. Later we actually meditate on emptiness to gain direct insight into emptiness.

The direct study of emptiness comes mainly by the great masters Nagarjuna and Dharmakirti who described emptiness in terms of logical reasoning. The indirect meaning approach to emptiness was presented by the great arya Maitreya in this text on the Prajnaparamita called the *Abhisamayalankara*. In this teaching he gives the indirect meaning of emptiness by explaining the five paths and the ten bodhisattva levels.

The Cultivation of Prajna

To begin with we are living in samsara and samsara contains much suffering, hardships, and difficulties. A closer examination shows

that these difficulties and suffering spring from ignorance. Now the main way of removing ignorance which is the cause of all these problems is to cultivate wisdom, specifically, the wisdom of emptiness.

We begin with just limited wisdom, and eventually through our practice, this matures into a vast wisdom or *jnana* which is the wisdom of the Buddha. The most effective way to remove our negative states of mind is through wisdom. The classical example to illustrate this elimination of our suffering through developing wisdom is the example of the rope and the snake. If there is a rope which is coiled up in a dark room and we look at the rope not knowing it is a rope, we can mistake it for a snake. If we think it is a snake, then we panic, becomes frightened, and this causes much anguish. This mistaken idea is the cause for our suffering and is caused simply by our ignorance. We are simply ignorant of the true nature of the rope and believe it is a snake. The solution for eliminating our anguish is to simply know that it is really a rope and our belief that it was a snake was just a delusion. It is through this wisdom of seeing the true nature of the rope that we can eliminate our suffering in this situation.

In a similar manner the great suffering and problems in our life all spring from not knowing the nature of the delusion which is our perception of the world. We don't really need to resort to aggression or anger, yet we do it. We don't really need to give rise to desire or wanting, and yet we do it. Our anger and desire cause many problems and difficulties. Now the very best way to remove the problems and suffering of life is to attack the very root of the problem which is to understand the delusion and the ignorance which has created the whole situation. We can see through this delusion by cultivating wisdom, showing us how important cultivating wisdom is for us.

When we talk of the Prajnaparamita, we are talking about this perfection of wisdom or the wisdom that carries us to the other shore. This is precisely because there is nothing to equal this wisdom of emptiness. Cultivating prajna is the very best manner to eliminate the suffering of samsara and from it we can get a direct and true insight into the way things are.[5]

Unfortunately, because we have many obscurations of mind, we cannot suddenly switch to a state of a very bright and vivid prajna. So we need to study the scriptures of the Buddha (the *sutras*) and the various Buddhist commentaries of the great masters (the *shastras*). Having studied these, we can then contemplate and reflect very deeply about what we have read and heard. It is through this we can progressively cultivate prajna.

The Study of the Sutras and Shastras

It is very fruitful to study the discourses given by the Buddha which cover many areas. One can study those of the *hinayana* system and one can study those which have been adopted by the *mahayana* system. However, in Tibet, which was the land rich in *vajrayana* teachings, there wasn't a great emphasis placed on the teachings given by the Buddha himself, but rather an emphasis was placed upon the study of the great discourses and commentaries given by the great Buddhist masters living after the time of the Buddha. There is a good reason for the shastras being studied so much in Tibet. When the Buddha was teaching, a disciple would come and ask a particular question and the Buddha would give an answer. Then another disciple would come with another question and the Buddha would answer that particular question. Throughout his life that is how the Buddha taught. He didn't give long and well-structured discourses on one particular topic and then move on to the next topic in a logical sequence. As a result after the Buddha's *parinirvana*, some of the great Buddhist masters systematically arranged the various teachings into certain topics. Their works were entirely based on what the Buddha taught and not their own personal theories, but they organized the Buddhist teachings in a systematic way. If we were to begin by readings the various sutras of the Buddha, we would find there are so many of them, and it would take a very long time to build up an organized picture of what the Buddha was teaching.[6] It is much easier if we start by examining the shastras which present the very pith of the teachings summing up the teachings of the Buddha very concisely. Once we have that picture, we can then read the actual sutras of the Buddha and know that a particular one fits with a particular topic and thus we can understand

the teachings of the Buddha much better. This is why in Tibet much more emphasis was placed on the shastras.

We can take the example of the Prajnaparamita literature which were actually teachings given by the Buddha in 100,000 stanzas comprising twelve Tibetan volumes. But there is also the 25,000 stanza Prajnaparamita teaching comprising three volumes. Then there is the 8,000 stanza teaching comprising only one volume. So we can study the total of sixteen volumes on the Prajnaparamita taught by the Buddha or we can study the *Ornament of Clear Realization* which sums up the whole meaning of these teachings in just a few pages.

Chapter 2

Introductory Verses of the Text

The *Abhisamayalankara* was written by Maitreya and is a very concise shastra dealing with the Prajnaparamita. In the title, it is call an "upadesha-shastra" (Tib. *man ngag gi bstan bcos*), which in a few words gives the pith insight into a whole topic. In this text Maitreya[7] begins by describing this work as one which touches the very nerve of the Prajnaparamita and can convey all of it in these very precise terms.

The author of this text, properly speaking, is the great protector of beings, Maitreya. We have received this text through arya Asanga, the great Buddhist master who through his own spiritual realization was able to go to the pure realm of *Tushita*, where he received the teachings from Maitreya. Actually of the five main works of Maitreya the *Abhisamayalankara* is the first of these works. We know this is the first of the five because it begins with a homage and the other four don't have a homage.

Homage[8]

The introduction to the text begins by paying homage through prostrations to the mother of the Buddhas. The mother of the Buddhas is wisdom (Skt. *prajna*) because this very highest wisdom will eventually give rise to Buddhahood. Without this wisdom one cannot become Buddha. Therefore this wisdom is like the mother which gives birth to the Buddhas. Wisdom also gives rise to higher states other than Buddhahood which are also mentioned in this homage. The homage praises the wisdom which gives rise to the shravakas, in their state of peace, and the wisdom which gives rise to the great bodhisattvas.

In general there are three sections concerning the three kinds of prajna. The first prajna is basic knowledge of phenomena, the

second is the knowledge of the path, and the third is knowledge of omniscience. These three types of prajna give rise to all of the enlightened qualities of the buddhas. The *shravakas* and *pratyekabuddhas* cultivate prajna to understand how much suffering there is in samsara and the qualities of peace which calms suffering. Their main concern is to cultivate the first of these kinds of prajna. The qualities of the bodhisattva spring mainly from the prajna of the path. The main concern of the bodhisattva is to help other beings develop and mature. The actual ability to help other beings mature comes from their extensive study of the path. The third prajna of omniscience is the complete knowledge of all phenomena. It is the ability of the Buddhas to guide and lead beings which comes from this omniscience that they have. It is the wisdom of the path and the qualities of the Buddha, the goodness of the Buddhas comes from their wisdom of omniscience. The very essence of these three therefore is prajna, and because it gives rise to all their qualities, so this homage praises wisdom, the mother of the Buddhas, the bodhisattvas, the shravakas, and pratyekabuddhas.

The Necessity for Composing the Text

The first introductory verse was concerned with the homage, praising the mother in relationship to the three types of prajna. This next section deals with the necessity for composing this new text. In Buddhism, if someone wants to compose a new text, the person needs to be qualified to do so. Generally speaking, there are three types of authors. The very best type of author of a shastra has the realization of the *dharmata* or *universal essence*. The next best kind of author is one who has had a direct realization of the deities, such as Avalokiteshvara, Manjushri or Vajrapani. By realization we mean that the authors have met in their meditation with one of these deities face to face which gave rise to composing a shastra. It's not quite so good as having the realization of dharmata, but it is second best. The minimum qualification of an author of a shastra is that one has at least accomplished the *five branches of study.*[9] If one is very erudite and understands the implications of the terminology and the ramifications of various branches of study, one can also compose

meaningful shastras, but without a very vast and widespread breadth of learning one is not really qualified to compose shastras.

We should study those texts which were written by authors who had some or all of these qualities. If all three are present it is, of course, best. If these qualities are not there, we may be confused and be led astray in our practice. So we need to seek out those texts which are properly composed. The *Abhisamayalankara* is very rewarding because its composer, Maitreya, was not just very skilled in the five branches of learning, or someone who had a direct meeting with a deity, but he belonged to the category of those who had a direct and true realization of the dharmata.

The realization of dharmata is present in practitioners who have achieved the first *bodhisattva level.* Maitreya did not just achieve the first or second or third bodhisattva level, but reached the tenth and last bodhisattva level. He had the richest, most purified experience of the dharmata. Among all the bodhisattvas who attended the Buddha when he was alive, it was Maitreya who was asked by the Buddha to be his regent in this present time; so Maitreya is the representative of the Buddha himself and is called "the Protector Maitreya.

When we know that it was Maitreya who composed this text, we can have great confidence in it. If we put these teachings into practice, the fruition will be truly rich for us. This text was not made up by Maitreya, but was based entirely on the Prajnaparamita teachings given by the Buddha. If we don't have the key of the very essence of these profound Prajnaparamita teachings, then it will be very difficult for us to grasp their meaning. So Maitreya wrote this text to give us this key which will enable us to have access to the meaning of the Prajnaparamita.

In the present we cannot directly meet with the Buddha or listen to his teachings. But Maitreya who wrote this text received these teachings directly from the Buddha and they were transmitted to him in their full meaning. It is because of this that Maitreya is able to explain these teachings so clearly and directly. The main reason for his writing this particular text in the way he did was to clearly present the meaning, the overall content, the main point of the Prajnaparamita. He wrote this shastra so that the Prajnapamita

teachings could easily be understood and second with this understanding it would help individuals reach Buddhahood.

When we study the larger Prajnaparamita in 100,000 stanzas, we find that there are eight main sections. In the 25,000 stanza version there are also eight main sections, and there are eight sections the 8,000 stanza version. In this shastra there are also eight main sections or principal topics.

Nagarjuna also wrote on the Prajnaparamita, but in his direct exposition he used logic to explore, for example, what the Buddha meant when he said, "form is empty" by explaining the inner, the outer, and the combined aspect of emptiness.

In the direct expositions of emptiness by Nagarjuna, we learn how various things are empty, how form doesn't exist, how there is no ear faculty for hearing, and there is no arising of auditory consciousness. Essentially it is an exposition of the emptiness of everything. But implicitly, it is thereby also shown how this emptiness can be realized, how the wisdom realizing emptiness is developed and what it is that this wisdom overcomes. This hidden meaning of the Prajnaparamita sutras is what Maitreya is concentrating on when he explains the paths and bodhisattva levels in eight main sections.

The eight main topics of the *Abhisamayalankara* can be divided into three main sections. The first section contains the first three topics concerned with the ground or foundation of reality (Tib. *gnas lugs*).[10] The second section contains four topics concerned with practice called the "four applications" (Tib. *sbyor ba bzhi*). The third section has only one topic describing the fruition of practice, realizing the dharmakaya.

The Seven Topics

The first topic deals with the very highest form of knowledge or jnana which is the knowledge of all phenomena which is possessed by the buddhas. The buddhas possess two main types of jnana: the *jnana of the nature of phenomena* and the *jnana of variety of phenomena.* With these two kinds of jnana, the buddhas have the most complete and deepest form of prajna. This is the highest form

of wisdom and its name is the wisdom and knowledge of all phenomena.

The second topic concerns the knowledge of the path. This topic deals with the means of how to obtain this knowledge of the buddhas with the prajna which emerges and increases more and more as one progresses along the bodhisattva path and the wisdom that make this possible.

The third topic concerns basic prajna and it is from this basic prajna that the wisdom of the bodhisattvas on the path and the wisdom of the Buddha eventually emerges. This topic concerns the study of the wisdom of ordinary beings, shravakas and pratyekabuddhas which is the cause for the other kinds of wisdom to emerge. These first three topics deal with the foundation of prajna which are the three types of knowledge.

The fourth topic deals with how to actually apply these types of knowledge on the path step by step. The fourth topic is called "The applications of the realization of how to fully perfect the knowledge of phenomena." This is a discussion of at how to start one's practice and at the benefits of meditation.

The fifth topic describes what happens as a result of the previous stages of practice. This topic is called "the application when reaching the peak."

The sixth topic is called "the application of gradually going on." It shows us the further step-by-step progress of this path.

The seventh topic demonstrates how, because of the gradual application, in the end there is an instantaneous application of our practice and in that one instant, there is the complete culmination of prajna through the vajra-like samadhi. Then all of prajna becomes present within one phase. It is called "the application of full enlightenment."

The first seven topics discuss the three kinds of knowledge and the four applications and the eighth topic discusses the dharmakaya itself.

As we go through these topics we will find that each topic can be further subdivided and this actually yields seventy shorter subtopics in all.

Questions

Question: Is the *Diamond Sutra* part of the Prajnaparamita?
Rinpoche: The *Diamond Sutra* does indeed concern the Prajnaparamita. Generally when we talk about the various texts dealing with the Prajnaparamita, we usually mean the 100,000, the 25,000 or the 8,000 stanza version of the Prajnaparamita teaching. But there are actually seventeen principal works on the Prajnaparamita called "the six mothers and eleven sons" and one of the eleven sons is the *Diamond Sutra*.
Question: Do shravakas and pratyekabuddhas the only persons who have this first type of prajna?
Rinpoche: It's not just the shravakas and the pratyekabuddhas who have this basic prajna. All prajna which is not the deepest wisdom which understands dharmata, is considered basic wisdom. Everything but this deepest wisdom is called basic prajna, so it covers much more than that cultivated by the shravakas and pratyekabuddhas.
Question: What is a shravaka?
Rinpoche: The term shravaka is a general term for those who are following the hinayana teachings. The Buddha's taught the mahayana to those with a greater capacity and he taught the hinayana to those with a lesser capacity. Generally all of those who entered the hinayana teachings we call shravakas.
Question: Why is Maitreya the regent in Tushita?
Rinpoche: Before the Buddha came to our world to teach dharma and enact the last stage of his enlightenment, he was dwelling in a very pure realm called Tushita. At that time the Buddha's name was Dampatogdkar ("sacred white banner") and he had a divine existence and was teaching divine beings there. When he saw that the time had come for him to teach the dharma in our world, he knew that he had to leave that dimension, and predicted at that time that the buddha who would appear after him would be Maitreya. So before he left Tushita he appointed Maitreya to be his representative in Tushita to continue the teachings. This is why we call Maitreya the regent or representative of the Buddha.
Question: What is the difference between prajna and jnana?

Rinpoche: These two words are based upon the same root syllable *jna* in the Sanskrit. Sometimes their meaning overlaps. The syllable *jna* in both jnana and prajna means "wisdom." The syllable *pra* in prajna means "the very best." There are many different kinds of knowledge, but prajna is the highest knowledge. From all these different kinds of knowledge, the knowledge which allows us to realize the universal essence, to cultivate love and compassion, and to help us to help others is the highest knowledge which is called prajna with *pra* meaning "the best," and *jna* meaning "wisdom" or "knowledge." Prajna in Tibetan is *sherab* in which the first syllable *she* is equivalent to the *jna* in prajna and the syllable *rab* is equivalent to *pra* in prajna meaning "the very best." Prajna covers quite a variety of things, but principally it means the kind of wisdom which arises through thinking wisdom obtained through conceptually reflecting and contemplating very deeply.

When the Tibetan translators translated jnana the syllable *jna* was translated simply as *she* in Tibetan and then the translators added *ye* to this syllable make *yeshe*. They added the syllable *ye* to denote wisdom which arises from meditation, which transcends concept, so that as one cultivates meditation, there is a very profound understanding which is nonconceptual which is close to the wisdom of the buddhas. Because the wisdom of the buddhas and the great bodhisattvas has existed forever, the translators added this syllable *ye* which means "forever" meaning this wisdom has always been there. Actually in this particular text, sometimes when it says prajna, it really connotes jnana. So these words are used sometimes interchangeably showing they are not strictly separate terms.

Question: What is the meaning of sutra?

Rinpoche: The word sutra is used in two ways. Sometimes it is used to cover all of the teachings given by the Buddha himself. At other times it is used more precisely meaning one of the three sections of the dharma called the Tripitaka or Three Baskets. In the Tripitaka there are the Sutras, the Vinaya, and the Abhidharma. The sutras are mainly concerned with meditation or samadhi, the Abhidharma is mainly concerned with the development of wisdom and understanding, and the Vinaya is mainly concerned with discipline and the rules of morality and conduct. In the narrow sense sutra

means one of three sections of the Buddha's teachings, and in its broad sense it means all of the teaching given by the Buddha.

In Tibetan we say *ka* meaning the original canon, the words of the Buddha. In Tibetan we say *ten cho* or shastra in Sanskrit which means an explanatory text. We could apply the word shastra to the Buddha's teaching because they explain the Buddha's teaching to us, but actually this word is used for the texts that are commentaries on the words of the Buddha that were composed by Buddhist adepts. These shastras elaborate and categorize the teachings of the Buddha, but they are not words of the Buddha himself. So the main distinction is the sutras are the words of the Buddha and the shastras are later commentaries on the words of the Buddha.

Chapter 3

Bodhichitta

TOPIC I. THE KNOWLEDGE OF ALL PHENOMENA[11]

A. THE FIRST CONDITION: BODHICHITTA

The Prajnaparamita has eight main topics and the first topic deals with the knowledge of phenomena. There are ten subtopics in this first topic, the causes or conditions for attaining Buddhahood.

1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF BODHICHITTA

The first condition needed to attain Buddhahood is *bodhichitta.* The topic of bodhichitta is divided into two main subtopics: the characteristics of bodhichitta and the categories of bodhichitta.

The characteristics of bodhichitta are having the highest motivation. This motivation has two aspects. The first aspect is the wish to help all other beings. This doesn't mean helping just one person or a hundred or a thousand, but it means being concerned with helping absolutely all beings from the beginning of time throughout time and space. What happiness do we wish to give these beings? We realize that no one wants to suffer and that everyone wants happiness, but no one has it. So we wish to give all sentient beings the very best happiness and this is the state of perfect Buddhahood. So helping absolutely all beings and helping them reach Buddhahood creates the highest motivation which is a characteristic of bodhichitta.

We can also look at the characteristics of bodhichitta in terms of wisdom and compassion which must be present for there to be true bodhichitta. Compassion is being concerned with not just one's friends or relatives, but being truly concerned with the happiness of all sentient beings throughout space and time. True compassion is

also being aware that all sentient beings want to be free from suffering and that they all are trying to achieve happiness. Compassion by itself is not enough because the kind of happiness that beings seek and the way they choose to eliminate their suffering is often very limited. It is through wisdom that we begin to understand that true and eternal happiness is only achieved by reaching Buddhahood. With wisdom we realize that without achieving Buddhahood there is no permanent happiness. So wisdom is the second characteristic is the focus upon enlightenment. We can only definitely help sentient beings when we ourselves achieve enlightenment. Therefore we must wish for enlightenment.

Maitreya in his root text says that the sutras explain in both very concise and also in very detailed ways how all sentient beings can achieve Buddhahood. When the Buddha taught, he sometimes found it was necessary to elaborate on a subject very extensively so that people understood and at other times he taught in a very concise way. The function of the Buddhist commentaries is to show in a very concise way things which are very vast and profound. Commentators also sometimes expanded very concise sayings of the Buddha so that we can comprehend them better. That is why it is very useful to study not only what the Buddha taught, but also the Buddhist commentaries.

2. THE CATEGORIES (SIMILES) FOR BODHICHITTA

A more detailed explanation of the various of types of bodhichitta is made through twenty-two similes. These similes are arranged according to the gradual development of bodhichitta.

The first simile is an example of earth. When we first awaken our bodhichitta, we need a great longing and wish to achieve Buddhahood. When we desire to help others, our bodhichitta will flourish. If that aspiration is lacking, then it will be extremely difficult for us to make spiritual progress. So aspiration is the first quality of bodhichitta. This is compared to the earth because upon the earth one can build houses, plants can grow in it and so on. If there is no earth, then there is no foundation for these things to appear and be stable. When bodhichitta is accompanied with very good aspiration, then we can think of it as being like the solid earth.

The second simile shows us how this initial aspiration to help beings achieve Buddhahood needs to become firm, very stable and present all the time. This stability is compared to gold. We need to make our aspiration into something which will never change from now until Buddhahood. We cannot be very concerned to help everyone one day, and the next day forget all about this. We cannot even practice one year and the next year not. Instead we need to have a very good, continuous motivation which is much deeper than our initial aspiration. This motivation is compared to gold because gold has a quality of immutability, of changelessness. When gold is still in the ore, it has a golden luster. When it is mined and polished, it still has its golden luster. Gold is not like brass or other metals which blacken and tarnish with exposure. Because gold has this changelessness, it is compared to this very stable, healthy continuous aspiration.

The third simile concerns this bodhichitta motivation becoming even deeper. But one needs to make it much deeper, richer, more powerful. One does this through great diligence in our practice and improving the quality of our aspiration. Making this refinement and improvement of bodhichitta is compared to the waxing moon. The very new moon from the first day has a very fine crescent. Then each day it gradually grows and grows until it reaches a full moon. This is similar to our motivation which can become better and better all the time.

When we remove obstacles in particular the negativity of bad relationships and feelings towards others people by reducing our aggression through practice, then we can truly progress. This fourth simile compares removal of a fire that consumes everything placed in it. We should use our bodhichitta to work upon ourselves to remove all our obstacles.

The fifth through tenth similes are concerned with the six paramitas. The first four similes deal mainly with what inspires us to practice, the inspiration of achieving the good of beings using the examples of earth, gold, and the moon. Just removing our obstacles is not enough. We needs to act and practice so that the wish to help all beings become a reality through the development of the six perfections or *paramitas*. The first paramita is generosity which is compared to the fifth simile of a very great, inexhaustible buried

treasure because when we practice generosity in the present, it will cause inexhaustible wealth and goodness that will benefit others in the future.

The sixth simile is for the second paramita of discipline or morality. The first paramita of generosity when combined with our bodhichitta helps us to give to others. The second paramita of discipline helps us to purify ourselves. It is through controlling and purifying ourselves that all of the qualities of our own existence will emerge in the future. It is therefore compared to a mine of jewels from which will spring great treasures.

The seventh simile relates to the paramita of patience. When patience becomes a factor in our bodhichitta it is compared to a great ocean. Patience is concerned with not being swayed by hardships and aggression against us which we may experience. The ocean is compared to this because the ocean is very stable, very large, and unperturbed. When we have patience we are like the great ocean which is unaffected by normally disturbing factors of aggression and suffering.

The fourth paramita of diligence is the very joyous perseverance in our cultivation of bodhichitta. This perseverance or diligence means that we are striving to improve our bodhichitta all the time. This paramita is therefore compared to a *vajra* (Tib. *dorje*) which has the quality of indestructibility.

The ninth simile concerns the fifth paramita of meditation. When we have the power of this samadhi meditation, our realization becomes very stable, unshakable, and therefore is compared to the king of all mountains, because of its great solidity.

The tenth simile concerns the sixth paramita of wisdom, which is compared to medicine. When we have wisdom, we have the necessary tools to remove suffering, to remove the obscurations blocking our mind, and our mental conditioning. Our blockages and incorrect thinking are like an illness and wisdom is the medicine which has the power to completely remove this illness.

The eleventh simile concerns the presence of the seventh paramita of *skillful means* (Skt. *upaya*).[12] Through wisdom we develop certain skillful means which enhances our spiritual practice and this benefits self and others. The simile for these methods is a

our spiritual friend (Skt. *kalyanamitra*) from whom we also derive benefit.

The development of the union of wisdom (Skt. prjana) and skillful means (Skt. upaya) produces real power in our practice and this is achieved at the level of the eighth paramita or bodhisattva level. The presence of that power is compared to a *wish-fulfilling jewel* in the twelfth simile. When we actually have the ability to do what we would like to do to help beings, it is like having a wish-fulfilling gem which makes our dreams and aspirations come true.

The thirteenth simile concerns the ninth paramita of the power of prayer. There are two kinds of prayer: Prayers which are suitable because they deal with something that could happen and unsuitable prayers which deal with something that could never happen. For instance, if we were to pray that a flower would sprout from a table, then that would be a prayer that was an unsuitable prayer because this result is not possible. To make a prayer to help many others is a suitable prayer because it can actually come true. The power of prayer is compared to the sun because when the sun shines, it allows the flowers, the forests, the harvests, and so on to flourish. So when we pray for the development of our own virtue and wisdom, it is like the sun which makes things grow and brings them to their full maturation.

The tenth paramita, the completion of transforming prajna into jnana, deals with the fourteenth simile. When our bodhichitta is accompanied by the presence of this most excellent wisdom (Tib. *ye shes phun sum tshogs pa*), it is compared to a very beautiful melody because when there is a very beautiful song, everyone who listens to it feels delighted and pleased. When our bodhichitta is combined with the presence of this excellent wisdom, then whoever we meet becomes graced by our bodhichitta so our presence will always have a very beneficial and pleasing effect on those around us.

The fifteenth simile deals with combining our bodhichitta with the five kinds of extraordinary perceptions (Tib. *mngon shes lnga*) and the five kinds of visions (Tib. *spyan lnga*). When we possess these supernormal faculties, we can really accomplish exactly what we want to do. For this reason this is compared to a great king because a great king has the power and status is accomplish whatever he wants to do.

The sixteenth simile is the combining of our bodhichitta with the power of tranquillity and insight meditation. When shamatha and vipashyana accompany our bodhichitta, it is compared to a king's treasury from which all wealth can be distributed.

The seventeenth simile is of a great highway. Our bodhichitta follows the path that has been followed by those who achieved realization before. This is the five-fold path of accumulation, junction, insight, cultivation, and meditation. By going along this path step-by-step the buddhas of the past have reached enlightenment and the present bodhisattvas who are becoming buddhas are also following this great path. In the future other beings will also find their way on this path to enlightenment because it is the one highway which leads to enlightenment.

The eighteenth simile is the combining very powerful compassion with our bodhichitta. When our compassion is completely unlimited and unbiased, then it is compared to a steed. It is like a very powerful, fast horse that carries us to our destination without straying from the path in the slightest degree. When we have this universal compassion, it is the mount which takes us unerringly to our goal of enlightenment.

The nineteenth simile concerns combining our bodhichitta with an excellent memory and being confident. When we are able to always remember the teachings that we have assimilated completely and when we have the confidence to pronounce these teachings at any time, then our bodhichitta is compared to a natural spring. A natural spring can provide nourishing water continuously without exhaustion. When we have perfected this memory of practice and this great confidence, we can teach properly forever.

The last three of these twenty-two similes deal with the state of Buddhahood whereas the previous nineteenth similes dealt with the development of a bodhisattva. The twentieth simile refers to the Buddha's speech and is compared to the music of a harp. The speech of the Buddha is concerned with helping sentient beings to mature and this speech is continuous.[13] This is compared to a harp which is a highly respected instrument which brings a beautiful melody to everyone who listens to it. In a similar fashion the Buddha's speech helps all who listen. The twenty-first simile refers to the Buddha's body, which is compared to the flow of a river. Water always flows

naturally along the lay of the land, doing this effortlessly and automatically along the contours of the land. The appearance of a buddha takes place effortlessly and his work flows effortlessly according to the needs and aspirations of the disciple. So that is why it is compared to the flow of a river.

The final simile refers to the Buddha's mind which is compared to a cloud because a cloud creates rain and this rain makes it possible for all things on earth—the flowers, trees, and food—to grow because of the natural activity of the cloud. The Buddha's mind with its inherent spontaneous motivation to help all beings is the very source from which all of the benefit which comes from Buddhahood flows. The individual raindrops signify the various manifestations of a buddha's activity to help other beings.

We can see that through these twenty-two similes we can progress from a beginner in dharma practice to being a buddha with our bodhichitta becoming stronger and stronger in this process. These examples also give us an idea of what we ourselves need to do as our bodhichitta grows.



Asanga

Chapter 4

Practice Instructions

The *Abhisamayalankara* is divided into eight main sections. The first main section discusses the knowledge of all phenomena. Here, this omniscience of the buddhas itself is not explained, but rather we are given what we need to know to make Buddhahood obtainable. First, we need bodhichitta and this was the first subsection because bodhichitta is the most important qualityto direct our mind towards supreme enlightenment. This second section is about the instructions we need when we practice.

B. THE SECOND CONDITION: PRACTICE INSTRUCTIONS

Once bodhichitta has become an integral part of ourselves, we develop the strong desire to achieve Buddhahood in order to help all beings. Just wishing for Buddhahood, however, is not enough because we don't have the knowledge required to liberate ourselves from this vast ocean of samsaric experience that we find ourselves in. If we just try to work out how we can become a Buddha by ourselves, we will never manage it. What we need to do is to realize that there have been great beings in the past who have gained liberation and we need their instructions to reach liberation.

Gampopa's *Jewel Ornament of Liberation* clearly shows the need for a spiritual friend through three examples. The first example is of someone crossing a great expanse of water who needs a ferryman skilled in crossing the water and controlling the craft. The second example is of a strong bodyguard accompanying one when traveling in a dangerous land. The third example is of a guide when traveling in a completely foreign area. In a similar way, we need a spiritual friend to give us advice and guidance on the difficult road to enlightenment.

1. PRACTICE

We cannot just study and contemplate the meaning of dharma, we have to actually practice it. There's a very vivid example of this given by the great dharma teacher, Shantideva. He compares spiritual practice to the need of actually taking medicine when one is sick. When one is ill, one can read all about medicine in the various medical books and learn everything about one's condition and what medicine one needs to take. But without actually taking the medicine, one cannot be cured. It is the same with dharma. There are so many texts that clearly show us what we need to give up and to acquire to gain realization. But just reading the books is of little benefit without actually practicing what is indicated in the dharma texts.

2. THE TRUTHS

Secondly, there is instruction on the truths. Once we are determined to practice, we must be sure we don't practice something which has been created just to please people, but something which is really true in the sense of being in accord with reality. Therefore the Buddha gave instructions on the truths, on the *four noble truths* and on the *two truths*. If we practice in accord with how reality is, we can be sure to have a positive result, otherwise we will not.

3. THE THREE JEWELS

The third point concerns the three jewels. The first jewel is the precious Buddha. Understanding the truth of phenomena and how to actually put things into practice depends upon the Buddha who is the teacher of the very best path we can follow to obtain liberation. Once our mind is set upon liberation, we need to find a way to achieve this. This begins, first of all, with the very best teacher of the most supreme path and this is the Buddha. If we ask what we should practice and how we can find the truths, we get this instruction on the three jewels and learn to see how the Buddha is the teacher, the Dharma is the path, and the sangha is the friends on the path. This enables us to find an authentic path.

We first turn to the jewel of the Buddha and the way we relate to the Buddha is not the same as in many other religions. In some religions, for instance, we have the idea of an all-powerful or all-mighty being to whom we can turn, and if we place our trust in this being and give ourselves completely to that all-mighty being, then in return he or she will be pleased and will liberate us. Under this theistic concept if we turn away from or invoke the wrath of this being, we will never become free. So everything depends upon the power of this being. The Buddhist tradition it not really like this at all. We take refuge in the Buddha and turn ourselves toward the Buddha, but it is not with the belief that the Buddha will be able to eliminate our suffering through the power of his blessing. No, the Buddha simply shows us what we need to do, what we need to give up, and what we need to meditate on by giving us a whole range of practices, and tells us that if we can do these things, we will eventually reach the same state of liberation as he achieved. This is how the Buddha shows us the path.

The second jewel is the path or the dharma, which are the teachings of the Buddha. It is the Buddha's teaching which is most important. The dharma is his gift through which we can attain liberation. We need to completely absorb these teachings and make them part of ourselves.

The third jewel is the sangha who are our friends who are also on the path of the Buddha's. Because of our circumstance we cannot meet the Buddha personally and listen to his teachings or to ask him to clarify our questions. Because we really need a friend to help us on the path, we turn to the sangha for help, who carry on the Buddha's teachings and hold the real meaning and experience of those teachings. The jewel of the sangha to whom we turn are people who have understood and assimilated the teachings of The Buddha, who actually put them into practice and through their practice have gained some result and realization. Even though the sangha hasn't achieved the ultimate achievement, they do possess some realization and experience from their practice. It's because of this that the sangha is so capable of helping us. They can show us how to develop the skills very precisely and help us discover what needs to be eliminated and just how to do it.

4-6. THE THREE TYPES OF DILIGENCE

Having received (1) the instructions on practice, (2) the truths, (3) the three jewels, we are now able to apply ourselves to a dharma free from faults which will benefit us. But this depends not only on the three jewels outside us, but also on our own effort. Therefore the instructions on diligence are important.

There are three main types of diligence to overcome are the three kinds of spiritual laziness. The first type of laziness is involvement with activities which are negative and harmful. If we don't do the things which are useful and helpful because they are things which are negative and harmful, then our practice won't progress. We need to have the diligence to eliminate our bad habits and preoccupation with things which we know are harmful to us and other people. This can be any misconduct based on aggression, any behavior based upon desire. So the first kind of diligence is called the diligence of cultivating noninvolvement.

The second type of laziness is spiritual fatigue meaning that we see the benefits of doing practice, but it seems to be too much for us to face because we feel exhausted mentally or spiritually. As a result we don't do as much as we could. The remedy for this is to cultivate the diligence of indefatigability. We tell ourselves, "How else am I going to make progress if I don't practice. If I do this now, much goodness will accrue for myself and others." By thinking this we can increase our inspiration to practice.

There is a very wonderful example for this diligence of indefatigability in the biography of Jetsun Milarepa. After he had been accepted as a disciple by his guru, Marpa gave him instructions on how to practice and Milarepa went into retreat. In this retreat he walled himself up and sat with a butter lamp on his head in the meditation posture. He would meditate until his lamp went out doing many, many hours in each session. For eighteen months he meditated with incredible diligence in this manner. After this time Marpa came and he said, "You've really practiced meditation diligently and now it would be good for you to relax a little bit, to come out, and walk around." But Milarepa thought how wonderful it was to be able to meditate, what a joy it was and he really didn't want a break. This sort of attitude is a wonderful example for us.

The third type of laziness is faintheartedness. The remedy for this is called the "diligence of thoroughly applying oneself to the path of practice." One might appreciate the great qualities that can come from the path and what can come out of practice, but one has this feeling that it is not really meant for one. One believes that other people can achieve enlightenment, but one believes that one will always be stuck and won't eventually be like the Buddha. This belief holds us back, so to overcome this lack of enthusiasm for our own development, we need to really believe that we can achieve Buddhahood. Believing we can achieve this goal, we will apply ourself continuously to the path.

7-8. THE FIVE KINDS OF VISIONS AND SIX CLEAR PERCEPTIONS

The next points deal with spiritual accomplishments. With practice we develop our meditation and through the power of shamatha special powers of the five kinds of visions and the six kinds of clear cognitions will arise in us. We will develop these five kinds of vision and will acquire these special powers of seeing. We will also gain these six supernormal abilities. As we acquire these, they will make our practice advance very swiftly because these exceptional powers equip us much better to progress on the path.

9-10. THE PATH OF INSIGHT AND PATH OF CULTIVATION

Next there are the instructions on how one must gradually enter on the *path of insight*, when the meaning of dharmata can be directly seen. We are shown what is to be abandoned and what is to be realized there. This is followed by instructions on the *path of cultivation*. All of these have to be practiced in time.

Questions

Question: We only have to pray to some powerful being in some sects of Buddhism to achieve enlightenment. One may pray to Amitabha and nothing more is required than faith in Amitabha because of Amitabha's vow. I think its called Pureland Buddhism and that seems to be different from what you have been teaching.

Rinpoche: There is indeed some truth in what you say. However, when one prays to Amitabha or Tara to achieve liberation there is a difference between this and the way one relates to a god in other religions. The difference lies in the fact that when one does those prayers, the emphasis is more in what comes from ourselves. One is not just praying to Amitabha to please him because he is all-mighty and one is powerless. It is simply not like that. It is true that when one does practice to Amitabha for instance, one is supposed to pray with great faith and one does the prayer in a certain way, and generates over and over and over again this one-pointed wish to achieve the state of *sukhavati* (Tib. *dewachen*). This is done because this produces the cause which will actually create the future experience of sukhavati. Even though this appears quite similar to praying to a god, we must understand that to obtain liberation is not pleasing or displeasing some higher power, but it is developing true longing and devotion to create the conditions necessary for liberation.

Chapter 5

The Path of Junction and Buddha-nature

Having developed bodhichitta (condition 1) and having practiced the instructions (condition 2), we arrive at the second path, the path of junction as a result of our meditation. The third condition for reaching enlightenment is the four stages of this path of junction.

C. THE FOUR STAGES OF SEPARATION (PATH OF JUNCTION)

The actual insight into the nature of phenomena or we may say into the universal essence (Skt. *dharmata*), takes place in the third stage which is called the path of insight. When we reach the path of insight, we receive the direct, definitive realization of dharmata. The second path of junction then concerns learning about the dharmata and in this stage we prepare ourselves and practice in such a way that we can obtain the realization of the path of insight. So it is as if we join with that insight, which is why its called the "path of junction" or "path of preparation."

1. WARMING

The first of the four stages of the path of junction is called warming. At this point we begin to warm to the experience of this insight into the universal essence. The wisdom or jnana which emerges on the path of insight is like a great fire and the analogy of this is that as we approach a great fire, we are warmed..

The name in the text which is applied to the path of junction is "definite separation." We achieve complete separation or release on the path of insight when we receive the actual insight into dharmata. This term "definite separation" is used here because everything that takes place on the path of junction is to give us this separation, this release.

2. SUMMIT

The second stage of the path of junction is called the summit or the climax. First, we warm to the experience of emptiness; we don't actually have it, but we practice it through aspiration. We know that there is this experience of dharmata and we wish to gain it. So first we warm to it, and then through coming closer and closer to the real experience, we reach this summit stage.[14]

3. FORBEARANCE

When our meditation improves further, we reach the third stage called forbearance which means that we are no longer afraid, that our mind does no longer shrink away from the realization of the dharmata.

4. HIGHEST WORLDLY DHARMA

The fourth stage of the path of junction is called the "highest worldly dharma" because we are on the threshold of this experience of true reality. When we gain the understanding of true reality, then from that time onwards, we become a realized individual (Skt. *arya*). This is the point between being a ordinary person on the tainted path and being a realized person on the untainted path. At this stage we would never return to what is tainted and we have reached the highest realization of all worldly phenomena.

On the path of junction there are four principal obstacles to be removed. The root of these obstacles will only be removed when the stage of insight and the stage of cultivation is achieved. But already one the path of junction we are removing the actual manifestation that would come from these different things that we need to eliminate in ourselves so they no longer manifest their effects.

In general there are two types of obscurations that need to be eliminated: the obscurations of the defilements (Tib. *nyon sgrib*) covering attachment, aversion, ignorance, jealousy, pride, and so on, and the obscurations of knowledge (Tib. *shes sgrib*), which impede the realization of emptiness, such as our concept of the subject,

object, and action. The four obstacles that are to be eliminated by the path of junction are the obscurations to knowledge.

The first obstacle is called the "concept of objects." This is believing that what is perceived such as visual forms, sounds, odors, tastes or objects that one can touch are external objects outside ourselves. We believe them to be solid and outside of us. On the first the path of junction, the stage of warming, we manage to overcome this concept of an external reality.

The second obstacle is the "concept of a subject" or perceiver. This concept is the belief that the perceiving mind that experiences these outer objects is separate from these outer objects. This is removed on the second stage of summit.

The third obstacle is called "concept of substantiality." Whether it be the outer world with all of those things which seem so real and so solid, or whether it be the inner mind, which one takes to be a thing with definite qualities; one manages to break through these misguided beliefs in the reality of mind and external objects. This takes place in the third stage of the path of junction which is the stage of forbearance.

The fourth obstacle is the "concept of projected reality." In the third stage we manage to eliminate our belief in the concrete reality of the outer world and the inner perceiver. This goes further because we develop an understanding of how these apparent outer and inner phenomena are only definitions, labels, and projected realities. We understand, for instance, that our body is just a projection of our mind so this last stage eliminates the belief in the mind's formulations of reality and the understanding of what these really are. This obstacle is removed on the fourth stage of the highest worldly thing.

The path of the bodhisattva is superior to the path of junction of the shravakas and the pratyekabuddhas, which are called "the rhinoceros-like practitioners" in the text. The reason the path of junction for bodhisattvas is superior is that in lesser vehicles the practitioners do not manage to get rid of these four incorrect beliefs, whereas on the bodhisattva's path, the practitioner manages to eliminate these four incorrect beliefs.

D. BUDDHA-NATURE, THE BASIS OF OUR PRACTICE

There are ten causal conditions for realizing dharmata. The first was bodhichitta, the second the practice instructions, the third was the path of junction which eliminated the four incorrect concepts. Now we will look at the fourth cause which is the basis for our practice. The word "basis" in Tibetan is *rten* means literally "that which one can rely on" and can also be translated as the "foundation" of our practice.

The foundation of our practice is Buddha-nature (Skt. *gotra*, Tib. *rigs*) and this Buddha-nature is the potential within all beings that allows them to achieve Buddhahood. If the potential is there, then it's worthwhile working on it, but if there's no potential then no amount of effort will bring about any results. The great master Nagarjuna explained this by saying if we take rock and we know there's gold inside it, then by making an effort we can make the gold that is contained in that ore appear. But, of course, if there is no gold in the rock, no matter how hard we will work, we will never obtain gold. For sentient beings, if we didn't have this potential for Buddhahood, there would be no way that we could make Buddhahood manifest. But because all beings are endowed with Buddha-nature, then the effort is worthwhile.

The attainment of Buddhahood comes about through the work and meditation that we do on the fifth path of cultivation. The very profound meditation at this stage is what brings about Buddhahood. This is possible because of the preceding stage of insight. Once we have had the lasting insight into the universal essence, we can work on the stage of cultivation. As we have seen, the path of insight depends upon the fourth stage of the path of junction called the highest worldly thing. This stage of highest worldly dharma comes as a result of the third stage of forbearance, which in turn comes from the second stage of the summit, which in turn comes from the first stage of warming. We begin this whole chain of events because of the presence of the Buddha-nature within us. Through the stages of the path and Buddha-nature we can make enlightenment a reality. By working on the stages of the path of insight, we reach the path of cultivation and eventually Buddhahood.

1-6. THE SIX DHARMAS OF REALIZATION

There are thirteen points discussed in this section on Buddha-nature. We have just discussed the first six of these called "the six dharmas of realization" which are the four stages of the path of junction, the path of insight, and the path of cultivation. They come about by eliminating the obstacles such as the disturbing emotions which block our realization. To eliminate these defilements we need to apply a remedy. We need to directly realize the true nature of dharmata. To do this we need to cultivate samadhi and to cultivate samadhi we need to control our life and practice discipline. All of those remedies spring from Buddha-nature, the potential present in all beings. Therefore Buddha-nature is called a remedy. As we cultivate the various remedies to our obstacles and put them into action, we will eventually manage to give up the obscurations of the defilements and the obscurations of knowledge. If these obscruationswere truly part of our mental continuum, we could never abandon them. But as these can be overcome, we conceive of this potential in terms of the possibility of abandoning.

7-11. THE SIX ACHIEVEMENTS OF THESE DHARMAS

Thus our mind makes it possible for the application of remedies, because there is Buddha-nature, and essence (Tib. *snying po*) of mind. If we return to the example of a person going into a dark room and seeing a coiled rope and thinking it is a snake; if there really were a snake, it would be very hard for us to get rid of our belief in the existence of a snake. But if it really is a coil is a rope, it is really possible for us to give up the concept of the snake. Likewise in our analogy, Buddha-nature, not the obscuration, is the real foundation of the mind and this allows us to give up the obstacles and achieving the fruition.

How does wisdom and compassion relate to Buddha-nature? What really enables us to eliminate the things we need to get rid of and develop the qualities of wisdom. This wisdom enables us to remove obstacles, and this wisdom springs from compassion. Because we really want to help all beings to achieve Buddhahood, we cultivate wisdom, and then use that wisdom to work on

ourselves. But compassion also automatically develops because of this wisdom. The wiser we are, the more powerful our compassion. Both of these qualities of wisdom and compassion are also part of the causal ground, Buddha-nature.

The next point is that working directly on Buddha-nature as the bodhisattva does on the mahayana path is far superior to working as a shravaka on the hinayana path.

The following point is that in the mahayana path, when we practice the various stages to the path of junction, we are able to help beings a little. As that matures, we reach the path of insight and then we can help beings even more. As that matures into the path of cultivation, we can help beings in an even more profound and vast way. Finally when our Buddha-nature fully manifests and we become a buddha, we can benefit sentient beings the most. So we can see that this stream of practice involving the mahayana path working with Buddha-nature is much superior to the methods of working on ourself on the hinayana path.

Finally, when Buddha-nature is fully manifest at Buddhahood, it creates the wisdom (Skt. *jnana*) which is present completely naturally and spontaneously without the slightest need of any effort on the part of a buddha. At Buddhahood, Buddha-nature arises naturally as the highest wisdom.

Summary

In summary there are thirteen points in the study of Buddha-nature. The first six concern what is to be realized and these are the four stages of the path of junction, the path of insight, and the path of accumulation. In these six stages we saw that Buddha-nature gradually manifests more and more. The seventh point concerned applying the remedies. The eighth point was about eliminating the obstacles. The ninth point was about wisdom or prajna. The tenth point was about compassion. The eleventh point was how the mahayana is superior to the other paths. The twelfth point was that one benefits others gradually through these various paths. The thirteenth point is that at Buddhahood there is effortless jnana.

Those familiar with the *Uttara Tantra* may think there is some contradiction here, because the *Uttara Tantra* states there are

absolutely no divisions in Buddha-nature. These thirteen divisions here may seem to be contradicting this, but there is no contradiction because in the *Uttara Tantra* Buddha-nature is described as it appears on the ultimate or absolute level. At the absolute level there are no differences or separations of qualities of Buddha-nature. Here we are considering the presence of Buddha-nature at the relative level where there are divisions. So there is no contradiction.

The Ten Conditions for Omniscience to Develop

The first topic of the Ornament is the ten causes or causal conditions for wisdom of the Buddha to develop.

1. Bodhichitta
We must first develop a desire to help all sentient beings reach enlightenment.
2. Practice instructions
We must learn about the Buddhist path and apply ourself to these instructions. These instructions are found in the five paths.
3. The four stages of definite separation
We must go to through the four stages on the path of junction.
4. Buddha-nature, the basis for our practice
Our whole development of realization relies on the fact that we And all other sentient beings possess Buddha-nature.
5. The Objects of Focus
We must realize the emptiness of phenomena and we develop understanding of these through understanding 11 kinds of subjects such as understanding created and uncreated, ordinary and extraordinary, positive and negative actions, etc.
6. The Purpose
We need to understand the purpose for studying the Prajnaparamita and cultivating the bodhisattva path.
7. Armor-like Practice
Finally, there are four different practices we need to do to understand. This practice is perfecting the six paramitas.
8. Applied Practice
We need to then apply the four dhyana meditations to our practice
9. The Practice of Accumulation
We need to practice the accumulation of merit and the accumulation of wisdom.
10. The Practice of Certain Release
We need to understand the inseparability of samsara and nirvana.

Chapter 6

The Objects of Focus for the Bodhisattva

E. THE FIFTH CONDITION: THE OBJECTS OF FOCUS

This fifth condition for realizing dharmata encompasses the eleven different items we need to focus on in our dharma practice. As we study the Prajnaparamita and cultivate our wisdom, the focus of our attention is absolutely all phenomena whether they be good and useful things or whether they be bad or useless things. No matter what they are, we need to apply the Prajnaparamita to them. So generally speaking our focus is on all phenomena.

1-3 THREE TYPES OF ACTIONS

When we consider the various phenomena, we must engage in three actions: we must adopt virtuous actions, we must abandon unvirtuous actions, and neutral actions. The nature of virtue is that it is the causal condition for fortunate events to arise in us and virtue also benefits others. The very nature of virtue is that it helps us and it helps others. So virtue is to be adopted. Second is unvirtuous behavior which, of course, should be eliminated. The nature of unvirtuous behavior is that it hurts us because it is the cause for future suffering. Besides harming us, it also harms other beings. Third are neutral actions, which are neither positive nor negative in terms of virtue, neither useful nor harmful.

When we use these words, they have a certain feeling or flavor to them; so when we say "virtue," then it makes us think of what is good, what is wholesome, and we get a feeling of happiness and goodness. When we think of unvirtuous actions, ten it gives us the feeling of unwholesomeness, of not being good, of being harmful. There's good reason for this. What we call virtuous activities are

actions which produce the most fortunate results for us and will create all that is good and all that is admirable and beneficial for other people. Unvirtuous actions will bring only suffering, and harm. So those words are very justly used and often we can easily see ourselves what is virtuous and what is unvirtuous by nature. The way the Buddha taught what is virtuous and what is unvirtuous was in terms of long-term effects. When we act in a way that creates positive karma, it will produce happiness and these are virtuous actions which will cause happiness and cause benefit. When we manipulate situations and act in a way that causes harm to others then this will eventually create suffering and this is what we call unvirtuous actions. This is the way to understand this topic.

4-6. WORLDLY AND TRANSCENDENTAL UNDERSTANDING

We can also think of things in terms of the way of our understanding which may be either worldly understanding or transcendent understanding. If our mind is embraced by the thought of "I" and an ego, our thinking is embraced by various defilements, feelings, desires, attachments, and so on. This is worldly or mundane understanding and will lead only occasionally to virtue. For instance, when we have the correct worldly view confidence in the law of karma and so on. But generally this worldly thought is to be abandoned. The transcendent understanding, that is, the thinking which transcends the self, is found in the noble beings and doesn't have those defilements embracing it. Transcendental understanding is conducive to the path to enlightenment and to be adopted.

6-7. FOCUS ON THE TAINTED AND UNTAINTED

We can also examine phenomena in terms of tainted and untainted phenomena. We use the term "tainted" to mean that which leads to activities which will cause us to take birth in samsara and the lower realms. In Tibetan the word for "tainted" is *zagche*. These tainted activities are rooted in the belief in a self, an ego. Arising from this belief in self are three main disturbing emotions (desire, aggression, and ignorance) and all of their subsidiary ramifications. Once these defilements are present, then we will always continue on and on in

samsara or the cycle of existence. So what is tainted belongs to samsara. The untainted activities are those activities which are not embraced by the idea of a self. Untainted phenomena are those things which will help us achieve liberation from the cycle of samsara.

8-9. CREATED AND UNCREATED PHENOMENA

We can also examine phenomena in terms of created and uncreated, which are also sometimes called compounded and the uncompounded. Created phenomena are everything which must be assembled, be produced, through causes and conditions. Once we have things which are created or compounded, they are always subject to impermanence and change, which almost always leads to some sort of suffering. Uncreated phenomena, or the opposite, are not due to the bringing together of other objects. Uncreated phenomena are permanent and not subject to impermanence and therefore not subject to suffering.[15]

10-11. ORDINARY AND EXTRAORDINARY PHENOMENA

One can also examine phenomena in terms of ordinary phenomena of the disciples or the extraordinary phenomena of the bodhisattvas. The ordinary phenomena of the disciples refers to the activities common with the shravakas such as meditating on the selflessness of the personality, meditating on suffering, on one's own benefit and so on. The other aspect is the focus of attention on the extraordinary phenomena of the bodhisattva's great wisdom, the jnana of the Buddha, the special powers and so on. This is the wisdom of the bodhisattvas on the mahayana path.

In summary, there are eleven things which the bodhisattva focuses upon in his or her study of the Prajnaparamita. The first three were virtue, unvirtue, and neutral actions. The fourth was worldly phenomena. The fifth was transcendent phenomena. The sixth was the tainted phenomena, the seventh was the untainted phenomena, the eighth was compounded phenomena, and the ninth was the uncompounded phenomena. The tenth was the ordinary phenomena and the eleventh was the extraordinary phenomena.

F. THE PURPOSE FOR STUDYING THE PRAJNAPARAMITA

The sixth condition for realizing dharmata deals with the purpose for studying the Prajnaparamita, for cultivating the bodhisattva path, and for achieving the results of the path. This section gives three major reasons for studying the Prajnaparamita.

1. GREAT MIND

The first reason is having the most noble attitude which is not just trying to achieve one's own happiness and eliminating one's own problems and suffering, but eliminating all the problems for all sentient beings. Of course, it is a very worthy thing to find peace and happiness for oneself and to get rid of one's problems. But this is a rather limited approach. It is like a wealthy person with many relatives who are very poor and who keeps his riches for himself. This is shameful and not the very best thing to do. The natural thing for that person to do is to think in terms of helping more people around him. When we talk about having this most noble attitude, we mean thinking beyond ourself. The way to do that is to think of others as being like us, to think of giving them happiness just like we would desire to give happiness to ourself and to think of removing other's problems and suffering, just as we would like to remove these from ourself. That is the noble state of mind.

This most noble attitude is without limit or scope. To think of helping a hundred people to achieve happiness and eliminate their suffering is not enough, because apart from those hundred there are many more individuals who need help. To think of helping 10,000 or 100,000 people is still not enough. When we develop this most noble attitude, we think of absolutely every single sentient being that has ever existed from the very beginning, because all of them have always wanted to find happiness and to get rid of their suffering. Our task is to think of ourselves as a friend and support them in their work of finding happiness. This means not leaving out even one person because there's not even one who doesn't want or need the support of our attitude.

2. GREAT ABANDONING

We need to work in two areas to fulfill our wish of really helping sentient beings. First we need to eliminate the improper actions of body (physical actions), of speech (improper communication), and of mind (improper attitude and thought).

We also need to eliminate the cause of improper actions of body, speech, and mind, which are the disturbing emotions (Skt. klesha). The subtle root of these improper actions and defilements is the inaccurate cognitive belief concerning the nature of phenomenon. So we need to eliminate both our emotional and cognitive obscurations.

3. GREAT REALIZATION

Next we need to develop our realization. Basically we wish to go from our present state of knowing a few things to a state of understanding absolutely all phenomena. To develop that realization, we need to develop the aspiration to begin the path. This causes us to eventually develop moments of insight. Through the path of insight we will then develop the realization of the path of meditation. Eventually, we will have the complete realization of Buddhahood, which involves *knowledge of the nature* (Tib. *ji ta ba*) and the *knowledge of the variety* (Tib. *ji nye pa*) of pheneomena which are the two types of jnana.

Questions

Question: Could you please explain a little about the neutral actions.

Rinpoche: As the name implies there are those things that are in themselves neither virtuous nor unvirtuous such as walking, sitting, or lying down. These actions in themselves do not have an effect of happiness nor do they cause us to fall into the lower realms. In particular there are classically four types of neutral action: (a) going to places such as making journeys, (b) moving around such as walking within a one's town, (c) sitting, and (d) resting.

Question: Could you give a more detailed explanation on the sixth section called purposefulness.

Rinpoche: In this section on the purpose for studying the Prajnaparamita we are looking at is to understand why we are practicing dharma, why we are developing this knowledge of the Prajnaparamita. First of all means we decide what is the purpose, the meaning of it all, the object of what we are doing. That's why there were three main subsections about having a most noble attitude, having the very best renunciation, and having the very best realization. When we think about why we practice dharma, we can understand the need for, not just being concerned with ourselves, or even with our own nation, our race, our friends, but working for absolutely everybody. Because we know Buddhahood is the best kind of permanent happiness, then we can be certain that there is great value in bringing everybody to Buddhahood. It's not as though enlightenment is good for just a few. So the first point is to develop this most noble attitude of working for absolutely everyone.

Next we must realize that we can never really help everyone reach a state of enlightenment unless we remove our various the obstacles, blockages, and impurities. This leads to the great wish to get rid of everything that limits us and makes our mind impure. What will get rid of the impurities is actual insight. As we contemplates that, we see that insight is born in the wisdom of the Prajnaparamita. So through the study of these three things, we develop an understanding of what our purpose for practicing dharma. That's why this section is called purposefulness.

Chapter 7

The Meditation Practices and The Practice of Accumulation

In the last chapter we looked at the purpose of our practice. In this chapter we will examine the actual practice itself. The first of these is the armor-like practice which deals with our motivation, followed by the practice of actually entering the corresponding actions. Also in this chapter we'll look at the practice of gathering the accumulations, and the practice of certain release, which brings it all to perfection.

G. THE 7TH CONDITION: ARMOR-LIKE PRACTICE

Armor-like practice deals with the development of our motivation. It involves how we can turn our ordinary motivation into a vast motivation through diligence.

The development of motivation is mainly done through the practice of the six paramitas (generosity, discipline, patience, diligence, meditation, and prajna). It is vast because these are not just isolated paramitas, but within each of the paramitas, we need the presence of all the other paramitas. So the practice of the paramitas becomes very extensive and interwoven.

The Sanskrit word "paramita" means "perfection" or "transcending quality." The first paramita of generosity implies the highest kind of generosity. First we create a mind which is open and benevolent-- a generous mind, the thought of wanting to give. Next the paramita of discipline must also be present in that we make sure there is not the slightest strain of avarice or of other defilement associated with it. We also need to be unaffected by any harm that may come from the practice of giving. We need to be able to put up with these adverse circumstances by practicing the paramita of patience. When we give, we do it with great energy so we are willing to work through difficult and strenuous tasks that may arise in this

giving, so we need the paramita of diligence also. The act of giving can also be a support for our meditation. When giving, our mind should be one-pointed requiring the paramita of meditation. Also everything that takes place at the time of giving must be done by transcending the giver, the gift, and the receiver i. e. the so called three circles (Tib. *'khow gsum*).[16] To do this one must apply the paramita of wisdom. So one can see how within the perfection of generosity all five of the other paramitas need to be present.

In a similar way the paramita of skillful conduct also needs all six paramitas to be present within it. This is true also for the paramita of patience, the paramita of diligence, the paramita of meditation, and the paramita of prajna. All paramitas need to have the other six paramitas present in them to really be perfect. the firm intention to practice like this, with each of the paramitas within it is called the armor-like practice.

H. THE 8TH CONDITION: APPLIED PRACTICE

The second step of practice is called the applied practice. Whereas before we were concerned with our motivation for practice, now we are actually engaging in it. The application of the practice is first of all concerned with the development of meditation or samadhi in terms of cultivating the four dhyanas and formless meditations. If one wants to overcome samsara and gain the qualities of the Buddha, then the most important thing to do is to tame one's mind. The mind is the very root of phenomena. One really needs wisdom and meditation to tame one's mind. That wisdom springs from meditation, so the development of meditation will actually bring about what we are seeking. That comes about through our cultivating the dhyanas and the formless contemplations.

1. THE DHYANAS AND FORMLESS MEDITATION

The main concern of our text is the development of complete wisdom, the Prajnaparamita, which is the complete understanding of the true nature of phenomena. When we have understood the true experience of that nature, then our prajna becomes clearer and clearer until it becomes jnana, the highest wisdom of the Buddha.

That process can only take place if our mind is very stable and very sure. When the mind is stable and sure, we can quickly achieve results that we choose to meditate on. If the mind is unstable, changeable, and unreliable, then we will not be able to achieve good results. So we need to get the mind under control to make it something which is very stable. Therefore it is said here that we should first of all apply ourselves to meditation.

In general there are different kinds of meditation taught in various Buddhist transmissions. The spread of Buddhism can be categorized into three main movements. The Buddha lived in the world and taught the dharma in India in the 5^{th} century BCE. A few hundred years later, largely through the activity of the son and daughter of the great Indian king, Ashoka, one movement of Buddhism went to Sri Lanka (Ceylon) and then spread to Burma and Thailand. This became what we know today as the Theravada tradition. Within the Theravadin tradition there is a certain style and system of meditation.

The second evolution of Buddhism was called the mahayana and moved from India in the direction of China. This system of dharma placed a great emphasis on meditation. The word for meditation in Sanskrit is *dhyana*, which became *chan* when it was translated into Chinese. These mahayana teachings spread even further to Japan where the name dhyana was translated to *zen*.

The third evolution was called the vajrayana and went from India to Nepal and from Nepal to Tibet and from Tibet further north to Mongolia and Siberia.

Of course, all of those traditions came from the teachings of the Buddha, and they are all fair representations of his teachings, but there is some difference in the content, of how meditation was taught and presented. It is just a difference in technique, so whether it be in the Theravada or the Zen tradition, one begins directly with meditation without many other techniques. In contrast, it is a particularity of the vajrayana that there are an extremely wide range of techniques. Sometimes one may meditate on one's *yidam*, sometimes one may recite *mantras*, sometimes one may cultivate the visualization stage of practice, sometimes one simply does straightforward one-pointed concentration. What makes the vajrayana system a very good way to practice is that there are such a

wide range of techniques making it easier to tame the mind. One can apply the various techniques rather than striving very, very hard with just one technique.

To the newcomer to the dharma, this vast range of meditations and visualizations may seem a little strange—sometimes one deity and sometimes quite complex deities with many arms and many faces, sometimes peaceful or wrathful deities. It seems like such a vast panorama that one may wonder why. The reason for this vast choice is simply that all of these practices are various skillful means suitable for taming the mind. So we many sometimes meditate on one deity, sometimes on another, but as they are all means to tame the mind, the mind can definitely be tamed this way.

2-4. THE PARAMITAS, PATHS, AND LIMITLESS MEDITATIONS

This text shows many techniques that we can use to train our mind. We can meditate on the six paramitas, or the five stages of the path, or the four limitless meditations of love, compassion, joy, and impartiality. These are all some of the various means for taming ourselves.

5-6. HAVING NO OBJECTS AND PURITY OF THREE CIRCLES

The meditation on the Prajnaparamita concerns understanding emptiness. To do this we sometimes choose objects on the relative level such as love or the paramitas. At other times, we concentrate on the absolute level where there are no objects, just as the empty nature itself. Sometimes we also meditate on the "purity of the three circles" (Tib. *'khor gsum rnam par dag pa*), by abandoning all clinging to the notions of perceiver, perceived, and the act of perception.

Sometimes we meditate with an object, sometimes we meditate without one. Sometimes we meditate with a precept in our meditation, sometimes without a precept. To tame our mind, we need sometimes to contemplate the meaning of objective reality, to think about the paramitas, the various stages of the path, and the four immeasurables. But if we were to do that all the time, then its quite possible we could become involved with the idea of doing something

in order to achieve a certain result, which becomes too solid and causes us to become too preoccupied with what we are doing. Because we may blame too involved, it is sometimes very healthy to meditate without an object, meditating on the emptiness itself. So there are meditations with an object and meditations without an object, which we should alternate.

7-9. PURPOSEFULNESS, SIX CLEAR COGNITIONS, AND KNOWLEDGE ALL PHENOMENA

The whole purpose of our practice as bodhisattvas is to be able to benefit others and to benefit them in a really vast way. So we should not be satisfied with doing these practices for our own benefit alone. To help others extensively, we gradually also develop the six clear cognitions and finally the knowledge of all phenomena, the state of Buddhahood. And even now, as we have not progressed that far we can listen to them beings explained and cultivate the idea; for the sake of others, we'll develop them.

Summary

In this second section which we studied today which dealt with the actual application of practice which consists of nine topics: (1) the dhyanas, (2) the paramitas (3) the stages of the path, (4) the four limitless contemplations, (5) the absence of an object in meditation, (6) the absence of the three-fold aspect of perceiver, precept, and act of perception, (7) the purpose of the path, (8) the clear cognitions, and (9) the wisdom of all phenomena. If we actually practice these, then our practice will really evolve from the *stage of accumulation* to the *stage of junction* to the *stage of insight* to the *stage of meditation* and eventually to the stage of complete and perfect Buddhahood.

I. THE 9TH CONDITION: THE PRACTICE OF ACCUMULATION

We have discussed armor-like practice concerning motivation, applied practice concerning the bodhisattva actions and now we will

discuss the ninth condition for achieving enlightenment—the accumulation of merit.

There are two the accumulations: the accumulation of virtue and the accumulation of wisdom. We know, of course, how to develop our virtue, but the idea here is to show us how to develop a very vast amount of virtue. We also know how to accumulate wisdom, but we want to cultivate the very deepest, most profound wisdom. So this section focuses on how to achieve the very highest virtue and wisdom.

1. GREAT COMPASSION

Unbiased compassion is the root for the vast accumulation of merit. But compassion cannot flourish in the presence of adverse factors such as anger and aggression or the wish to harm others. So if we believe that someone is an enemy, then that idea will gradually produce thoughts of anger and hostility. This will then produce an cumulative effect, because anger creates a the situation that results in negative reactions from other people. We can see in a very obvious way that there is absolutely no benefit in being angry or hostile. As long as we are hostile, it will lead to harming others, and this harm will return to harm for us also.

The best way to overcome anger and hostility is to employ compassion which is the remedy for aggression. The reason compassion is the antidote to hostility is that our life is actually like a mirror. When we look into the mirror making a grimacing, angry face, then in the mirror we see a hostile grimacing reflection. If we make a very beautiful, smiling face, then when we look in the mirror, we see a very beautiful, smiling face. It is like that with life. If we generate hostility and aggression, then life will be very hostile and aggressive towards us. On the other hand, if we love other people and are concerned for their well-being and treat them with respect and appreciation, we will find great love and friendship and comfort in our life. Once this happens, it is a process which accumulates. The more we love, the more we can learn how to love, and the more harmonious our life will be. The very root of having this good relationship with the reflection of life is the cultivation of

compassion. It's from having compassion that all of the good qualities of relationships emerge.

2. GIVING

Having cultivated compassion, we need to engage in the six paramitas. We have seen before how these are very important in our practice. When we are practicing the paramitas, such as generosity, we can see that they take place in relation to the external world. But it is not so much what takes place on the outside that is important, but the inner way in which we relate to the situation. For example, Shantideva in the *Bodhisattva's Way of Life* says the parameter of generosity is not so much trying to remove all poverty in the world, because that is impossible. Rather the paramita of generosity concerns the inner aspect of our motivation, the mind. When we think, "Through this act to I will remove poverty" or "I will remove the hunger and famine," what is really important is the desire to help. Whether it works or doesn't is not really the important thing, but the state of mind which determines whether we have the actual perfection of generosity. It is compassion that is the key factor for developing the actual perfection, because it is compassion which gives us the properly motivated mind.

3. DISCIPLINE

It's the same with the second paramita, skillful conduct or moral discipline. Moral discipline is concerned with right action of body, speech, and mind. When one cultivates the paramita of skillful conduct, it is not that one is concerned with eliminating killing throughout the universe or that we could stop all the animals from devouring each other. The perfection of skillful conduct means developing within oneself the impossibility of ever harming and killing others. It means becoming someone who never lies, steals, or does any unvirtuous thing with one's body, speech, or mind. If one has mastered this in oneself, not in the external world, then one has mastered the paramita of skillful conduct.

4-7. THE OTHER PARAMITAS

Of course, it's the same with the paramita of patience. The perfection of patience doesn't mean removing all the outer difficult, aggressive circumstances, but mastering the mind so that we will never give rise to negative reactions such as anger. Similarly, with the other three paramitas of diligence, meditation, and prajna, we can understand that the development of their perfection comes from the mastery of ourself, the perfection of our own mind.

The great master Shantideva gives a very vivid example for he says, "To avoid pain to our bare feet, we can either cover the entire road of thorns and stones with leather, or we can cover the soles of our feet with leather." To cover the whole external world with leather is, of course, impossible. If, however, we just take a very small piece of leather and make shoes to cover our feet, then wherever we go, it is covered with leather. This shows very clearly how we relate to the paramitas. We do not engage in the paramitas by transforming the objective world, but we master our own mind. Having mastered our mind, wherever we go there will be the perfection, the smoothness that we seek.

8-10. TRANQUILLITY AND INSIGHT AND THEIR COMBINATION

The next points concern tranquillity (Skt. *shamatha*, Tib. *shinay*) and insight (Skt. *vipashyana*, Tib. *lhagtong*) meditation. Tranquillity meditation is the cultivation of peace or calmness and the stability of mind. Relying on a peaceful mind, we'll apply insight meditation to actually experience the world as it really is (Skt. *dharmata*). To gather the two accumulations of merit and wisdom, the bodhisattva need to meditate.

A beginner to meditation learns various techniques for calming the mind which are the techniques for shamatha. We learn the various techniques for cultivating our penetrating insight, or vipashyana. As this meditation progresses shamatha and vipashyana become more unified so that our insight improves our tranquillity, and our tranquillity improves our insight. So there is first shamatha, then vipashyana, and then the union of these two forms of meditation.

11. SKILLFUL MEANS

The next point deals with all the various means that one would employ to gather the accumulation of the six paramitas, compassion, and shamatha and vipashyana, and their union. One can use all of these on the path to enlightenment.

12-17. SIX MORE POINTS

The next three points in this section summarize the practice aspect and review what has already been said. First, we must practice jnana or the experience of the dharmata. Second, we must practice the accumulation of merit by means of the six paramitas and so on. Third, the five paths are to be traversed progressively in order.

Then there are three points which belong to the wisdom aspect. The fourth point is called *dharani*, that is the development of certain dharani will enable us to have total recall, and to be able to bring very clearly to mind what we have studied. The fifth point concerns the ten bodhisattva levels we'll gradually traverse. The sixth point deals with the various remedies we must apply to first subdue and then eliminate the various obstacles we have encountered consistently, i.e., the obscurations of defilements and knowledge.

J. THE 10TH CONDITION: THE PRACTICE OF CERTAIN RELEASE

The tenth condition for reaching enlightenment is the practice of certain release which is explained in eight different topics.

Covering these briefly: The first point is that the purpose of certain release is the same as the practice of accumulation, namely, great mind, great abandoning, and great cultivation. With these in mind we can achieve this practice. The second point is that samsara and nirvana are identical in relation to the true nature of phenomena. The third point is by relying on certain release, the helping of others becomes completely effortless. The fifth point is freedom from the limited ideas because the result achieved is absolutely measureless. It is not something which can be conceived of conceptually. The sixth point deals with how all the buddha qualities are already present when one attains the actual state of Buddhahood. Seventh, upon reaching Buddhahood one does really have omniscience, the

total knowledge of absolutely everything. Finally, the reason for attaining the state of omniscience is the progress along the five paths.

At this point we are at the end of the first principal sections of the text, the "knowledge of all phenomena" giving the ten causal condition for attaining Buddhahood.

Questions

Question: In which paths do the five kinds of visions and the six clear cognitions emerge?

Rinpoche: Mainly, they emerge with the path of insight and the path of meditation, but they can also emerge in the path of junction, because the path of junction is preparation for those higher paths.

The clear cognitions and the different visions are a supporting or helping factor in one's development. They begin to emerge on the path of junction to some degree and reinforce one's practice. The more they develop, the more they enhance the practice. But they don't emerge totally on the stage of junction.

Question: Rinpoche, can you explain a little more about the third and fourth stages of the path of junction, the stages of courage or forbearance and the highest worldly thing.

Rinpoche: On the third stage of junction, one's courage really means never letting any sort of doubt about emptiness to develop. In the whole path of junction one is coming close to understanding the true nature of phenomena. This courage means that one follows up what one knows to be right about it, and one doesn't let any doubts develop that would delay one's realization of emptiness. It is very determined, very courageous in one's development of understanding of this true nature, which is emptiness. It is through this determination, that one realizes the genuine experience of emptiness. The very first instant of truly realizing the nature of phenomena is the last stage of the path of junction, the highest worldly dharma. The succeeding instant is what we call the next stage which is insight properly speaking.[17] The highest worldly dharma because it is the last moment, the end of one's worldliness and one can never ever return to worldliness, which is why its called the "highest worldly dharma."

Question: Is taming the mind the most important thing in the development of the paramitas, and then how does that fit in with the activity of the bodhisattva which is very much concerned with helping other people in the outer world.

Rinpoche: There is, of course, a difference between the way in which the mind works for the hinayana practitioner and the way the mind works for the mahayana practitioner. Even though taming the mind is the most important thing, if one does not have the bodhisattva motivation to develop the paramitas, one will not have the wish to really help others and do bodhisattva activity. If one is only concerned with one's mind, then one doesn't have the motivation to develop the paramitas. Even though there is such a vast array of things in the outer world, inner mind is very important in relation to any particular action, and not the outer world. One vivid example comes from the life of the fifth Gyalwa Karmapa who went to China where he was one of the spiritual teachers of the emperor of China. The emperor had great faith and devotion towards him and made very lavish offerings of gold and silver and brocade. On his way back to Tibet, the Karmapa received some offerings from an old lady who gave him a goat with a broken leg. The fifth Gyalwa Karmapa said that he had never received such a great offering as that meaning that all of the marvelous offerings he had received from the emperor did not equal the offerings given by this old lady. Of course, people found this amazing because everyone was so impressed by all the vast riches given. The point is that the emperor gave so many things, but he didn't give everything that he had. The old lady, however, had only this goat with a broken leg, so her generosity was complete. Because of her thought, her gift exceeded that of the emperor.

Question: In relation to the things which one gives up on the four parts of the path of junction, could you explain the fourth stage, which is belief in apparent reality.

Rinpoche: In the third stage we give up a belief in a concrete reality. Ordinary persons believe that the outer, apparent world is very real and solid and has its own existence. Likewise, they think that the mind also has some substantial existence and is a thing. The third stage one is overcoming the belief in the outer world and inner mind being solid things.

In the fourth stage, it's more subtle because one can realize that everything that manifests either without or within oneself is just a fabricated reality. We can realize that we have created it by our conscious labeling and a definition of reality. The fourth stage is the process of undoing these labels, this projecting which is the main concern here, rather than the actual belief in reality. It's working on eliminating the conscious process that we use to create the outer and inner ideas.

Question: Could you say more about the path of junction and the four stages?

Rinpoche: We should understand that on the path of junction we don't actually realize emptiness. We are working towards the realization of emptiness or the true nature. In the path of junction we are trying to cultivate certainty within ourself about emptiness, to become more and more definite and convinced and appreciative of what emptiness means. To do that we need to get rid of the things within us which are contradictory to this truth of emptiness.

The four kinds of thought that we work with are concepts within us which block that realization, because they are contradictory to the truth which enables us to actually realize the emptiness on the path of insight. What we do in these four stages is to work with and reduce those four kinds of thoughts. We make them diminish and diminish, and not manifest in an obvious way. But the seed of those thoughts, the subtle root of those thoughts, can only be removed later through insight and the development of that insight. So on the path of junction we are taking away the blockages to emptiness, in particular the absolute confidence in emptiness.

Chapter 8

The Hinayana Paths

TOPIC II. KNOWLEDGE OF THE PATH

In this chapter we move on to the second main topic of the eight topics of the text, which deals with the knowledge that the bodhisattvas have of the path. We will study the path through eleven subtopics.

A. THE FOUNDATION OF THE PATH

Understanding of the path is understanding the essence of the path that the bodhisattva travels and the way in which this path can be accomplished is the foundation of the path itself. The basis or foundation from which the path arises, is the first topic.

1. REMOVING PRIDE

The Buddha taught the dharma to many different kinds of beings. When he taught the Prajnaparamita, there were many, many gods who came to hear about the Prajnaparamita and to see the Buddha. These gods had most magnificent and resplendent bodies, radiant with light, very beautiful and very subtle. When they came to hear the teachings with their radiant and beautiful bodies, they were completely outshone by the splendor of the Buddha. The magnificence of the Buddha's physical radiance put the radiance of the deities to shame reducing the pride of those gods. The reason that the Buddha had such a magnificent body was that before he was the Buddha, he had studied the teachings and put them into practice with an absence of pride. As a result of that, he was by far the most resplendent being causing the gods to respect him.

When we practice there are some things that we must eliminate: desire or attachment, aggression, stupidity, jealousy, and pride. Because these are the root of negative actions, they are also the root of suffering. In particular, when we study and practice the dharma it is most important to eliminate pride. As long as we have pride, it is very hard for the good qualities to emerge. Our pride means we are concerned with our external appearance, possessions and also our inner mind. As long as pride is present, the real qualities cannot grow. In the sutras there is an example of pride, having pride is like an overturned pot. If a pot is the right way up, whatever is poured into it is retained, but if a pot is turned upside down then whatever is poured into it just runs off. So when we study, if we have pride then we never really receive the essence of the teachings.

2. CERTAINTY OF THE OBJECT (PRACTICE)

After removing pride, the root for proper practice, we must develop certainty about the object. If we are a casual practitioner, then sometimes we don't follow the path and sometimes we intend to practice and rejoice in the practice and sometimes we just let it drop for awhile. If we are this kind of casual practitioner, then we'll never really carry our practice through to the end. Of course, anything that we do that is good will have favorable results. But with a casual attitude, we can never achieve full fruition. Therefore we need complete conviction about the goodness of what we are doing.

3. ENCOMPASSING (ALL PRACTICE)

Besides having a certain commitment to what one is doing, we need a complete commitment by really applying ourself to the totality of the practice. Rather than being selective we practice all of the paramitas, not just a few of the paramitas.

4-5. NATURE AND THE FUNCTION

The fourth point is to work upon developing the realization of the true nature of phenomena. The true nature is a vital topic in our meditation. The removal of pride, the definite commitment to one's

practice, the totality of the commitment and the study of the true nature need to be put into action. The making of these first four points reality in terms of our practice is the fifth point. These five topics are the foundation for the path. The remaining ten subtopics concern the path itself (Tib. *lam dngos*). In this section we will study the main ways shown by the Buddha. We will see the path of the shravakas, the pratyekabuddhas, and great path of the bodhisattvas, we'll look at the path of insight, the path of cultivation and so on.

B. KNOWLEDGE OF THE SHRAVAKA PATH

The only way to Buddhahood is the mahayana path. There are some people who are capable of practicing that way and the mahayana and some people who are not yet capable. Rather than leaving out those who can't practice the bodhisattva path, the Buddha taught the hinayana path. They will be able to practice, and it will bring about very good results. For their sake, the Buddha taught the hinayana for those who will be able to ultimately achieve enlightenment.

In the hinayana path, the students learn about the four Noble Truths of the Buddha and meditate upon the meaning of these four truths. The goal of the practice is to eventually gain an actual direct realization of the meaning of these four truths. There is a very good example to help us understand the four Noble Truths. When we are sick, we first need to understand just what the illness is or which part of the body that is sick and we need to make a good diagnosis to understand the illness. To effectively cure the illness, we need secondly understand the cause of the illness. Then third we need to think of how good it is to be healthy, how we really need to recover from that sickness. We need to know the value of health. Then fourth we need to know what medicine to take to bring back the state of health. If we understand these four steps in medicine, it is easy to understand the four truths in relation to a spiritual malady.

When we are living in samsara, we need to know the very nature of our existence. We need to know that it is impermanent and there is always suffering in samsara. Suffering is a very inherent part of samsara. As we study, this becomes very clear and we become aware of the truth of that nature of suffering, which belongs to our present condition. The first Noble Truth is it is the knowledge of the truth of

suffering. This corresponds to diagnosing what the illness is. But to know about suffering is not enough, we need to get rid of it. We cannot just immediately annihilate suffering, but must remove the causes of suffering and the causes of future suffering. Therefore we need to know what those causes are which is karma. We need to know that karma stems from the disturbing emotions (Skt. *kleshas*), so karma and these defilements are the very cause of suffering. The knowledge that karma and the defilements must be eliminated is the second Noble Truth of the origination of suffering. This corresponds to knowing the cause of the illness in the previous example. Next we need to know how elimination suffering that leads to lasting happiness. Knowledge of the value of cessation is the third Noble Truth of the cessation of suffering. This corresponds to wanting to become well in the previous example. In order to get rid of the cause of suffering, one needs to practice the path of dharma which is the fourth Noble Truth, the truth of the path. This then corresponds to taking medicine in the previous example.

The four Noble Truths were taught by the Buddha to the followers of the hinayana path. The followers learned about the four truths, and then contemplated their meaning, and they meditated on these four truths which lead them to the results of the path of the shravakas. But the four Noble Truths were also the principal topic for those following the mahayana as well, because this path leads to liberation and the knowledge of all phenomena (Buddhahood). Therefore, mastering the four Noble Truths is suitable for those of the hinayana and the mahayana. But even though the object is the same, there's a difference in their approach. In the hinayana, the four Noble Truths are very real being the truth of reality, so suffering is understood to be very real and substantial. Likewise, the cause of suffering, karma, and the defilements are seen as truly existing things. Cessation is seen as something that really exists. The path is seen as a truly existing phenomenon, too.

In contrast, the bodhisattvas approach the four Noble Truths from emptiness and are in themselves not solid, independently existing things. Of course, they know that in the relative world suffering is real, but they also realize that when we look at the very essence, the very nature of what is taking place, there is nothing but emptiness. It is the same when they study the causes of suffering:

they understand how these causes have their relative reality, but they also understand how these causes are in themselves no more than emptiness. So their approach to the four Noble Truths is different.

When we compare the two main approaches of the lesser and the greater vehicle, we can neither say that they are completely the same nor that they are completely different. It is not as though everything that concerns those two paths is different. Many factors about those two approaches are the same. In both of these paths we are trying to find out the real nature of phenomena. Whoever applies the teachings of either path properly can achieve the final result of liberation which is their great similarity. On the other hand, they are not exactly the same because in the lesser vehicle, the teachings are quite limited. They are very skillful teachings given by the Buddha for people of a certain capacity. These teachings are easier to practice and their result is easier to achieve. In the mahayana, as we have already discussed, the four Noble Truths are seen in the context of profound emptiness and all aspects of the bodhisattva path are included. By practicing this all-embracing path, we can achieve the ultimate goal of Buddhahood. So we could say that from a preliminary point of view, the paths of the lower and greater vehicle have a different nature, whereas from the ultimate point of view, their essence is the same. Therefore the bodhisattva needs to know the shravakas path as well.

C. KNOWLEDGE OF THE PRATYEKABUDDHA PATH

In the last section we examined the shravaka path. Now we are concerned with the knowledge concerning a higher path of the pratyekabuddhas who are called in the text "solitary buddhas," because they realize the truth by themselves. In former lives, they studied with a buddha or other teachers and learned how to practice the dharma. Then later, in order to bring this to fruition, they are born in a world where the dharma teachings are not known. Because of the power of their former karma, they have an inquisitive mind that wants to know what life is about, where they come from, and what will happen to them in the future. They find themselves propelled by this power of karma to go to places such as funeral grounds, and there they see the bones and rotting flesh and they start

to think, "What does all this mean?" They think those bones are a token of death and that death with its suffering comes about because of birth. When they think about where birth comes from, they realize that birth itself comes about because of karma. As they contemplate this they realize karma comes from the defilements. Then they look even further into this understanding and realize those defilements come from, the belief in the self or ego. In the light of what they understand, they decide they must practice and so they go and do their practice. They go to meditate and they feel very comfortable by themselves and don't feel the need to resort to a teacher or companions. They understand things all by themselves and go and meditate all by themselves. They're lovers of solitude and because of this, they are compared to a rhinoceros because it has this very big single horn on its nose. This singularity, this solitude is a key factor concerning them.

Pratyekabuddhas don't particularly want to teach the dharma or what they've understood to others. But if someone happens to come along and realizes the pratyekabuddha's qualities and wants to learn how to do that for himself, then the pratyekabuddha will help him. But they don't teach in terms of words and ideas. Pratyekabuddhas don't formally accept students (Tib. *rjes su 'dzin pa*) give spoken teachings, rather would lead the other person by what they actually do. They use their very subtle bodies that they gain from their practice to demonstrate miracles. By seeing these extraordinary things, the other person will gain some understanding.

The pratyekabuddha practitioner in their renunciation manage to realize the nonexistence or emptiness of external phenomena and of the self. On the path of junction, there were four things which were to be eliminated: the idea of the precept, the perceiver, objective reality, and the belief in the reality of mental formulations. Of these, the pratyekabuddhas manage to rid themselves from the first idea and they really understand the true nonexistence of external objects. So they achieve this and they also understand of course the nonexistence of personal self. The pratyekabuddhas understand the nonexistence of the external objects, but they still don't realize that the mind which is the perceiver has no true existence. They still feel the true existence of the experiencing mind. This path of the pratyekabuddhas is a very worthy object of knowledge for the

bodhisattvas because it is a genuine path leading to liberation from samsara. For this reason, the bodhisattva needs knowledge of the shravaka path, the pratyekabuddha path and the bodhisattva path: They are all genuine paths.

Summary

In our study of the knowledge of the path, we first examined the foundation for the path, which enables us to enter upon the path. Second, we examined the shravaka's path and we saw what constitutes their approach and their practice, and also what sort of results will emerge from that. Third, we examined the more extraordinary path of the pratyekabuddhas. We saw again what they practice and the results which spring from their practice. Not only that but we also saw how the bodhisattvas are not ignorant of this path. They understand the path of the shravakas. Not only do they understand that path, they understand how that path is empty of any true nature in itself. They understand it is not something that is solidly existing. Fourth the bodhisattvas understand the path of the pratyekabuddhas. They know it, they understand it, and also they understand how it is not truly existent.

Chapter 9

The Bodhisattva Path of Insight

We have studies the path of the shravaka, the path of the pratyekabuddha, and now come to the bodhisattva path. This is divided into knowledge gains on the third path of insight and knowledge gained on the fourth path of meditation.

D. THE PATH OF INSIGHT OF THE MAHAYANA

The first aspect deals with the knowledge of wisdom of the path of insight. Presently, we and most other beings have lost our clarity of perception of the true nature of phenomena. With our ignorance, we have projected our present reality, which we call samsara. The problem with this is that as long as we are living in ignorance produced by this delusion, there will always be suffering, hardship, fear and so on for us. Obviously, we need to be able to remove this ignorance from our being. To eliminate ignorance we need, first of all, to perceive clearly the true nature of phenomena. Once we have this clear vision of it, we can meditate on it again and again until the reality of the dharmata manifests. On the path of insight this first vision of the true nature occurs.

The insight into the true nature begins on the path of insight and becomes clearer while proceeding on the path of junction. To obtain a clearer idea of what is taking place, we can return to the example of the rope, which is mistaken for the snake. When we see a rope and mistake it for a snake, then we have a deluded perception. Of course, as far as the rope itself is concerned, it has nothing at all to do with a perception of a snake. It's just a rope. But because of our deluded perception we develop fear and anguish and suffering. Now to remove that anguish and panic, we could take snake venom antidote or make a snake trap. All these remedies won't work except to realize that the rope is just a rope and seeing it as a snake was a delusion. So the path of insight where one gets the true vision of

what is really taking place. One sees the true nature. On the previous path of junction we gradually come closer and closer to this realization of what is really there by thinking and reflecting on the nature of reality and again and again and trying to meditate on it. On the path of insight, this meditation results in actually seeing reality as it is.

When we realize that the rope is just a rope, then that is enough to eliminate the illusion of a snake. We don't have to do anything further because this removes the delusion. In that respect, it's the same when we have reached the path of insight. The insight into the true nature of phenomena is enough to remove the various mental defilements and we particularly need to work on these disturbing emotions because the vision of the truth automatically dispels them, just as the true perception of the rope dispels the idea of the snake. There is a difference, however, between the example of a rope and insight into things as they are. The rope is very temporary and the delusion of samsara goes back to beginningless time. Because samsara is such an ingrained habit, even though one has seen the true nature, flashes and flickers of this deluded samsara will come back again and again. So we need to cultivate the true insight again and again until the realization is completely perfect. One does this on the next path, the path of meditation or cultivation.

We saw that the shravakas and pratyekabuddhas had the four noble truths as their main object of study and contemplation. Here on the bodhisattva path, the insight is into the four Noble Truths. The four Noble Truths deal with two main areas: the deluded state of samsara and freedom from the delusion. There is the cause and effect relationship between samsara with its delusion and liberation from this delusion of samsara. In the first Noble Truth we study the way that the deluded mind produces all of the suffering and the manifestation of the samsaric world as an effect. The second Noble Truth looks at the very root or cause of that suffering. The third Noble Truth studies the effect of liberation from delusion, that is the state of cessation of perfect Buddhahood. In the fourth Noble Truth we understand the causes which will liberate us from delusion. So we can see a cause and effect between the effect of deluded samsara and the cause of deluded samsara. There is the effect of liberation,

and there is the cause of liberation. This cause and effect is the principal topic of the path of insight. In more detail:

First of all, samsara is suffering. Sometimes we are suffering and having difficulties, then sometimes we feel happiness and joy, and at other times there is a neutral aspect to samsara when we are neither suffering nor particularly joyful. So at first it would be rather exaggerated to consider the whole of samsara to be suffering. But when we look from an absolute point of view, which is much more subtle and more profound, we realize how the whole of samsara is riddled with suffering and is full of suffering. We see that even if there is some happiness, it is always very temporary. Maybe it will last for ten or twenty years, but the person who experiences that happiness must inevitably be subject to the conditions of aging, sickness, and death. For that reason alone we can see that living in samsara is not the very best happiness. It is not lasting, but so fragile and so superficial. The Buddha has taught that all things and people must end one day or another. All composite objects must end in disintegration at the end.[18] Everything that is gathered together must be dispersed. Everything that is born must die. So when we know that, we can understand how it really is true that samsara is suffering. The understanding of the truth of suffering means that we appreciate how the whole of samsara is intimately, inseparably bound up with suffering.

The second Noble Truth deals with the origination of that suffering by understanding that suffering is a product which comes as a result of karma, of one's actions. We see that karma (literally "action") is in itself produced by our mental defilements. They induce us to act, and the actions produce samsara. So the defilements and karma are the two main topics of the second Noble Truth or the truth of origination. Under the sway of our mental defilements, we sometimes act virtuously, sometimes we act unvirtuously, and sometimes we act neutrally. All of these actions create other causes for a later interwoven manifestation of samsara. On the relative level the bodhisattva understands the first two truths: what suffering is, and its causes. But more than this the bodhisattva understands these two truths in their ultimate sense too. The bodhisattva understands how suffering has no true independent nature of its own. He or she understands also that the causes of suffering have no true

independent reality of their own. The bodhisattva goes far beyond the appearances of things to the ultimate truth, and so the bodhisattva develops jnana or the deepest wisdom in respect to those two truths.

The second set of cause and effect concerns the cessation of suffering and what brings it about. If we really think about what goes on in samsara, we see many different kinds of suffering. Some people have different kinds of physical suffering, some people have no work that causes anguish, and so on. What makes it even more complex is that it is not just one person's problem because we live in the great ocean of suffering of samsara. So we are part of a whole web of humanity and other beings suffering. The way to get out of this is not to work directly each individual suffering, but to gain definite liberation from the whole system of samsara. So we need to eliminate the very causes of the suffering which is karma. We need to eliminate any cause of karma and the cause of karma is the defilements. When we want to stop suffering, we need to eliminate the defilements. When we manage to completely eliminate these defilements, we gain a real cessation of suffering. The way we can actually eliminate the defilements is through the various skillful means of the path. How to go about blocking off all the suffering within us is dealt with in the fourth truth of the path. The cause and result of cessation then is like with the first two, the bodhisattva not only sees how the bodhisattva takes place in a relative way, but also has this profound understanding that cessation is itself empty and that the path itself is empty. This is a very deep insight and takes place on the path of insight. The bodhisattva gains insight in a way that has been described as the four Noble Truths, suffering, its cause, cessation, and its cause. Therefore the path of insight is called "the path of seeing the four truths" (Tib. *bden pa bzhi mthong bati mthong lam*).

When we reach the path of insight, we achieve the first bodhisattva level (Skt. *bhumi*) called, "overwhelming joy." The reason that it is called overwhelming joy is because when we realize the truth of emptiness, there is such joy of realizing that at last we have really achieved what we have been hoping for so long to benefit ourselves and others. For so long we have been working towards achieving some definitive realization hoping and hoping for

real insight into the true nature of phenomena. Suddenly it is there, in the very palm of our hand. It is something very real that we won't lose. It has been so long awaited that one is overwhelmed with joy. It brings great joy for oneself because before when we had not reached this level of realization, one wished very, very much to help other beings, but one did not have very much power or ability to help others. When one reaches this level of insight, then suddenly one has the power to help others. One has the ability, the vastness, the wisdom to really do a vast wave of activity to liberate other beings. Because one can at last do what one has wished to do for so long to help them, one is again filled with spontaneous joy. So that is why it is called the stage of overwhelming joy.

Chapter 10

The Bodhisattva Path of Meditation or Cultivation

We are in the second section of the text that is knowledge of the path. So far we have studied the first four subdivision, the first of which was showing the foundation of the path, which was for instance concerned with giving up pride. Then we saw something about the shravaka's path, the pratyekabuddha's path, and the path of bodhisattva.

There is a good reason for calling this fourth path the path of cultivation rather than the path of meditation. The Tibetan word that is translated as "cultivation" is *gom* which also means meditation. This word has the sense of getting used to something encountered on the path of insight, namely, dharmata. But experiencing dharmata is not enough because there's still something that needs to be worked on to make that experience more and more familiar so that it becomes more and more perfect. So this is why this path is called the path of cultivation because one cultivates the realization that starts with insight, and one meditates on it more and more until realization is complete. Returning to the example of the snake and rope, all the fear and anxiety of thinking it is a snake are removed, by simply knowing it is a rope. Mistaking a rope for a snake is a temporary misconception with little conditioning involved. However, the delusion that we have that covers our perception of dharmata is much more difficult to remove because we have held it since beginningless time. Even when we see the true nature on the path of insight, through the tremendous power of habit, the delusion will return. This is why in the path of cultivation one needs to cultivate the pure experience until it is all-embracing.

There are two main aspects to the path of cultivation: the untainted and tainted aspect. The untainted aspect concerns actual meditation when one is absorbed in the realization of the dharmata. This is the very pure complete absorption into the true nature. On the path of insight, we were only concerned with this untainted

dimension of seeing absolute reality. But on the path of cultivation, we also have a tainted dimension which concerns post-meditation when one is not completely absorbed in that experience. In post-meditation, we work on the development of the power of the roots of our own virtue, on the benefiting of other beings, on the removal of illusory stains. Because we are working on theseon the relative level, its called the tainted dimension. We will now look at various aspects of the path of cultivation, the first being the functions, what can be achieved by the path of cultivation.

E. FUNCTIONS OF THE PATH OF CULTIVATION

The first point is complete pacification. By meditating on the path of cultivation one will, first of all, develop efforts in pacifying one's own defilements, ego-clinging, obscuration of knowledge and whatever else needs to be abandoned.

The second point is respect for all beings. One will have lost one's arrogance and not engage in x (enticing) everybody, but naturally feel respect towards others.

The third point is victory in the battle over the defilements. By the power of pacifying one's mind and being respectful to everyone, one will be able to suppress and eventually completly eliminating one's defilements.

The fourth point is not being subdued by negative influences. Besides defeating the maras and kleshas within one's mind and stream of existence, one also gains victory over the outer manifestations of the maras which are the various negative forces and even demons seem to appear. There is an intimate relation between the inner maras, and the appearance of seemingly outer, negative influences. Once one has crushed the power of the maras within, then automatically the negative influences on the outside are crushed and are no longer effective. So the next part of this section on the path of cultivation says that one overcomes harmful influences.

All of these qualities arise gradually by the Bodhisattva's practice of the path of cultivation. Therefore the subsection we are in is called the "functions" or "actions" related to the path of cultivation (Tib. *byed pa sgom lam*).

F. THE ASPIRATION OF THE MAHAYANA PATH OF CULTIVATION

The bodhisattvas who are traversing the stage of cultivation have very great diligence and aspiration which is the very root of their actual progress. They are inspired first by the most profound realization of the nature of phenomena, they hope to achieve for themselves the very highest goal possible for a being. Second, they are inspired to achieve the very greatest benefit for others. Third, they have very great determination to achieve the simultaneous benefit of self and others. It's that determination that spurs them on.

On the path of cultivation, one is continually developing one's learning on the previous path of insight. One is working on removing all of the blockages and flickers of previous conditioning which are left. One is also trying to develop all the good qualities which enhance one's insight. The key to all this is really to have diligence and it is the degree of one's diligence which will determine the emergence of the result. So just to rest in that level of realization in itself is not enough. In general, there are two types of diligence. The first is the diligence of continuous application where one makes efforts for say a month or a year and then continues and continues with the development of one's spiritual realization. The second is called the diligence of inspiration meaning not being half-hearted in what one is doing. Rather one has full of inspiration for what one is doing and one will just work at realization with love as much as one can. There is a very good example for this latter sort of diligence in the life of Jetsun Milarepa. We can see from his biogaphy[19] that his appreciation and respect for what can emerge through practice made him work so hard on his own development. An example of the first continuous diligence is Asanga who for three years meditated on Maitreya. He didn't get much tangible results, so he meditated for another three years, and then another three years, and another three years. In the end, from the time he started his retreat until the time he actually had the vision of Maitreya, he had meditated incessantly for twelve years. These two sorts of diligence then help us swiftly traverse the stages of cultivation.

To summarize our diligence is focused on benefiting ourselves, upon benefiting others, and benefiting simultaneously ourselves and others. So this concern with our own achievement and helping others is the whole reason for applying diligence. Whether we will actually achieve great or little benefit for ourselves and others is intimately dependent upon the kind of spiritual inspiration that we have to help others. It's for this reason that these three topics on aspiration are a fundamental aspect of the path of cultivation.

We begin dharma practice with only a small aspiration to help others. That can be developed until one has a medium degree of aspiration. In the text, it mentions three levels of aspiration of small, larger, and great. When one applies these to the three areas of one's work, it makes nine kinds of aspiration. For one's own benefit, one can either work on enlightenment with a lesser aspiration, a middling aspiration, or very great aspiration. Working on the simultaneous benefit of oneself and others is concerned can be done with a lesser aspiration, a middling aspiration, or a greater aspiration. Working specifically for the benefit of others, one can go about it with a lesser, middling, or greater aspiration. This makes nine possibilities. These are very important in very practical terms in bringing about the different realizations and getting rid of the obstacles and karmic traces which are still left. This once again stresses the importance of aspiration in the actual work that one does in this path of cultivation.

G. THREE KINDS OF PRAISE ON THE PATH OF CULTIVATION

As already discussed on the path of cultivation there is a tainted aspect and an untainted aspect to the stage of cultivation of the path. The tainted aspect covers five points: function aspiration, praise, dedication, and rejoicing. As we have seen, aspiration is an important factor for progress through the stage of cultivation because with it we will be very diligent and apply ourself to the development of this vision of the true nature that we have had. It is through this diligence that we will actually make progress and achieve the results. With this aspiration we have such an appreciative mind to praise the three jewels.

The praise bodhisattvas make because of their great aspiration, is a key factor in their development. These are not just blind eulogies addressed to just anything. They are very meaningful prayers, expressions of the joy the bodhisattva on the path of cultivation. The object of the prayers of these bodhisattvas is to the most perfect Buddha, the most perfect state of Buddhahood, and to other great bodhisattvas. They engage in praise to be able to generate more spiritual energy to help others. What they praise and the way in which they make their aspiration is most skillful and most appropriate because this really develops a great benefit to themselves and to others. Ordinary people when they praise something or are praised tend to develop more pride and this gives rise to more problems. However, these bodhisattvas are so pure that the giving and receiving praise does nothing but enhance their wisdom and their understanding. It's very wonderful. Just as we had three different levels of aspiration—lesser, middling, and greater—we have three degrees of praise: praising (Tib. *bstod pa*), more respectful praise (Tib. *bkur ba*), and very profound praise (Tib. *bsngags pa*).

H. DEDICATION ON THE PATH OF CULTIVATION

On the tainted path of cultivation, there are five points: functions, aspirations, praise, dedication, and rejoicing. The three key points are aspiration, dedication, and rejoicing. As we have seen, aspiration is the inspiration from which everything takes place. Through aspiration, we make progress and generate a great deal of energy. Dedication channels the energy we developed through aspiration into the bodhisattva paths. We can compare this to gold. Through aspiration we are on the path of cultivation, and this is like the gold being worked into the beautiful ornament one wishes to have.

When we study this aspect of dedication on the path of cultivation in more detail, we will find that it has twelve particular attributes. On the path of cultivation, the activity of dedicating, the power of one's practice, is very special and quite singular. It is called the supreme action. Normally if we do something good then we create something virtuous. If we just leave it at that, then the power of that virtue can rapidly be corrupted because immediately

afterwards we spoil it with pride and all of the normal negative feelings. Or we might simply do something some minor benefit and thereby the positive energy exhausts itself making the virtue only temporary. Generally speaking, we need to dedicate or channel that virtue immediately towards most perfect enlightenment. In that way, not a drop of it is lost and it is turned into a cause for the very best of all things. So this dedication makes the maximum use of everything that we do. This dedication to Buddhahood for the sake of others is the supreme activity because it is endowed with a special need and a special result.

The second attribute is that the dedication of the roots of virtue of the bodhisattvas on the path of cultivation is made rich because it is done without any objectifying of what takes place. It transcends the three circles that which is to be dedicated (the roots of virtue), the one who dedicates (the bodhisattvas), and the one to whom they dedicate (all sentient beings). Those three things are not mistaken for real entities because the bodhisattvas know fully well that these things are empty of a nature of their own.

The third attribute of this dedication is that it is completely unerring. When one gathers some power through practice, one could channel that power into something harmful for other beings by use that power to increase the defilements which would be harmful to others. The dedication made by the bodhisattvas on the path of cultivation is unerring, because what they achieve is always dedicated to the good of all beings. They are dedicated so that dharma practice may be achieved in the most perfect way, so there is never anything but the very best wish of dedication.

The fourth attribute, is that the dedication is isolated. This means it has nothing to do with selfishness. The dedication is only for the good of all other sentient beings without the slightest trace of wishing that the products of one's practice in some way benefits oneself. It transcends any trace of selfishness.

The attrubute point is that their dedication follows the example of the Buddha. In the past the buddhas and bodhisattvas have created roots of virtue and have dedicated these to the good of all beings. In the present, buddhas and bodhisattvas are doing this and in the future they will do this, too. These bodhisattvas who are on this path

of cultivation dedicate in just the same way as all the Buddhas of the past, present, and future.

The attribute point is that a Bodhisattva's dedication is accompanied by skillful means. Their dedication of virtue is not an empty wish. They dedicate the actual power they have acquired through their practice of the six paramitas, so their generosity, skillful conduct, forbearance, and so on are what is actually dedicated. So the dedication is associated with their skillful means.

The seventh attribute is that the dedication has no characteristics. This means the dedication is made in the light of understanding emptiness. If the person who is dedicating clings to the idea that there is something to be dedicated, someone who is dedicating and someone the dedication is for, the dedication is impure. Instead bodhisattvas on the path of cultivation make their dedication in the true knowledge of emptiness, so they don't fall into the trap of intellectual solidification.

The eighth attribute is that the dedication is pleasing to the buddhas. This is a sign of its quality and great purity. Therefore it is pleasing to all of the buddhas and generates great joy and rejoicing in those who have achieved the full enlightenment.

The ninth attribute is that the dedication is not an instrument of the three realms. One could channel the power of one's practice to obtain some sort of samsaric reward, in which case it would fall somewhere within the *desire realm*, the *form realm*, or the *formless realm*. This dedication, however, channels the power of practice towards liberation and enlightenment.

The tenth, eleventh, and twelfth attributes are called the lesser, the middling, and the great dedication. The tenth point is that the first three stages in the path of cultivation, which are the second, third, and fourth bodhisattva levels is a dedication of a lesser power. The eleventh point is that because of the higher realization and purity of the bodhisattva on the fifth, sixth, and seventh bodhisattva levels, the dedication has a middling power. Then on the eighth, ninth, and tenth bodhisattva levels which are also called the very pure bodhisattva levels, there is the most superior form of dedication. That is the twelfth point.

With these twelve attributes we can understand the particularity of dedication of bodhisattvas on this path of cultivation.

I. REJOICING ON THE PATH OF CULTIVATION

The next characteristic of the path of cultivation concerns this rejoicing in our virtue and attuning to other's virtue. We have seen that the fact of dedicating our virtue changes it into the bodhisattva path. Rejoicing increases that power and makes it something very vast and encompassing.

First of all, the attunement is associated with skillful means. When bodhisattvas create spiritual development, not only do they dedicate their own spiritual realization and power and rejoice in it, but they attune to everything accomplished by other great bodhisattvas and buddhas. Because of the attunement the power automatically increases.

The rejoicing in virtue or attunement takes place beyond any objectification, i. e. it is beyond the "three circles" of there is someone doing it, something that is done, and someone is receiving the act. This is not objectively solidified so their rejoicing is very pure.

The attunement of our virtue is usually the remedy for jealousy. We should understand what a negative and destructive poison jealousy is. Jealousy has in it all the other poisons and promotes them. Jealousy is associated with desire for great personal qualities and is intimately linked to aversion to the qualities in others. It is also intimately connected to pride because we feel we deserve what others have. So we can see that jealousy contains all the other disturbing emotions and reinforces them. Once we fall victim to jealousy, it is very destructive because it causes us to do harm to others and causes harm to our own development. It causes all the goodness that we have accumulated to becomes dispersed.

On the other hand, if we do this attunement we are overcoming any tendency we will have for jealousy. Because jealousy is so innately related to the other disturbing emotions or kleshas, we are eliminating these five kleshas from our existence. Just by doing that, we are doing something very important and useful in our task to help others. That is why attunement is so vital for us.

We have just discussed the three aspects of the tainted dimension of the path of cultivation: aspiration and dedication and attunement.

Generally speaking, on the path of cultivation in the postmeditation stage, the bodhisattva is practicing the six paramitas and through this, we are accumulating a great deal of virtue and wisdom. These two accumulations are done primarily through these three practices of aspiration, dedication, and attunement. Everything they do in the postmeditation stage becomes the cause for a very vast and powerful practice that is beneficial for self and others.

J. THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE PATH OF CULTIVATION

We now come to the points covered by the untainted aspect of the path of cultivation. The first aspect of the untainted aspect is the achievement of the path of cultivation.

In general, on the path of cultivation we are cultivating the insight that one has gained on the preceding path and one is trying to perfect that insight. Because this achievement is working on the cause of Buddhahood, this key insight of the true nature of phenomena is called "the most supreme thing."

The achievement of the path of cultivation is very meaningful, because it is just by resting in this realization of the universal nature, that all the stages of accomplishment will emerge on their own accord. One does not need to focus the mind on one particular aspect or another. It is resting in the emptiness which is the nature of phenomena and that automatically everything will emerge. So one can see the great importance of that meditation.

K. THE PURIFICATION ON THE PATH OF CULTIVATION

The second point of the untainted aspect of the purification on the path of cultivation is thus closely linked to the aspect of achievement we talked about in the previous section, it is like looking at the other side of the coin. We will study the things that will produce the purification and also the things that will hamper purification.

There are three positive causes for the purification on the path. The first key cause is to resort to the supreme teacher. The great

bodhisattvas turn to the very best teacher for guidance. When they do this they feel a great inspiration to continue and develop their meditation and practice. From that inspiration will come diligence. From diligence will come the actual result of being able to help others and one's self. So the root of this is to turn to the very best teacher.

The second cause is to cultivate the six paramitas and the third is to develop great skillful means. These three bring about purification at the path of cultivation.

If we really want to achieve utter purity there are four obstructing causes which block us from achieving utter purity. The first obstacle is to be subject to the influences (Skt. *maras*) that will not allow our mind to turn to the dharma. The second obstacle arises when we have been able to enter the dharma, but lacks the particular interest in going very deeply into understanding the nature of phenomena. It is not wanting to find the deepest truth. The third obstacle is having a strong attachment to our skandhas, our body and so forth. The fourth obstacle is to enter into a close relationship with persons who lead us to do unvirtuous activities.

When we actually achieve utter purity, we must consider what it is we are taking away: it is the obscurations of defilements, the obscurations of knowledge and the obscurations of the lower paths which are concerned with one's benefit alone and which are present in the shravakas and pratyekabuddhas. For a bodhisattva, these three types of obscurations must be removed progressively as he or she moves on from the second up to the tenth bodhisattva level.

Questions

Question: Could you talk a little bit on the role of the lineage gurus.
Rinpoche: It was mentioned previously that we pay homage to the root guru and to the lineage gurus. The lineage gurus are the gurus of the line of transmission of what we study. These transmissions date from the teachings of the Buddha himself, but they don't go back beyond that. Even though the Buddha had previous lives and even though he may have had teachers then. Our transmission of the lineage gurus now come from the time that he taught the dharma in

our world onwards and they were uninterruptedly transmitted to our days.

We are familiar with the Buddha as a teacher from his teaching at Varanasi. This is what we call the highest nirmanakaya of the Buddha. The nirmanakaya is one of several aspects of the Buddha once he manifests enlightenment, the aspect in the world, the historical aspect.

If we consider our own Karma Kagyu lineage, we see that it goes back to the great master Tilopa. He did not meet Buddha in his nirmanakaya form, but he had contact with another aspect of Buddha, the dharmakaya Vajradhara, which is inseparable from the essence of Buddha's mind. So he also received teachings directly from the Buddha, but from the dharmakaya aspect. Beside this direct transmission from Buddha's dharmakaya, Tilopa also received the similar teachings indirectly through a lineage that came from the Buddha also, through the great masters, Saraha and Nagarjuna and so on. He assembled all of these teachings, either through direct transmission or through indirect transmission. They were handed by him to his student Naropa. Tilopa and Naropa were both great Indian masters. Then it went to Tibet with the great master Marpa, and then to Milarepa and Gampopa, and then handed down successively to the first Gyalwa Karmapa, and through the lineage of the Karmapas and their gurus up until the present day. Now all of the line of gurus in that transmission from the Buddha, who first gave the teachings, up until the present time constitute what we call the lineage lamas. When we take refuge and pay our respect, it is towards them that we address our prayers.

Question: I understand if one has the text in front of one, and one is studying it day after day carefully, one can digest it. I can't begin to digest it and the effect it has on me is confusion

Rinpoche: There is a very great benefit for us studying the way that we are doing, even though it seems too much, doesn't it? Because it's too much, we don't feel that we get any thing in the end, but that isn't quite the case.

In Tibet one's spiritual evolution came about through a mixture of different things. One could just specialize in Prajnaparamita and study it in very thorough detail and then meditate on it and achieve results that way. Or one could specialize in something else which is

just vajrayana practice. But what was found to be most beneficial was to marry the sutra level of practice with the tantra level of practice. It was discovered that there was really a great benefit to this so that, as we get an introduction to the Prajnaparamita (as we are doing in this text), we get some idea of what Prajnaparamita means, rather than just having some vague idea. With study at the sutra level we know just what the Prajnaparamita implies. Even a little knowledge really enhances our tantric practice, because it throws the light of wisdom onto everything the tantric practice symbolizes and why we are actually working with the tantric practice of the vajrayana also will shed light on understanding the Prajnaparamita. So that when we study, we will say, "Yes, It's indeed true, it's just like that." Even though we don't go to the very bottom of everything, this introduction to various topics, the bare bones of the sutras, is very useful.

Chapter 11

Knowledge of the Foundation

TOPIC III. KNOWLEDGE OF THE BASIS (OR FOUNDATION)

The first main topic of this text dealt with the knowledge of omniscience. The second main topic dealt with the knowledge of the path. This third main topic deals with the knowledge of the foundation or basis (Tib *bzhi*)[20] and this covers knowledge and understanding not covered in the first two sections.

We are dealing here with the wisdom of those who have not yet realized the knowledge of all phenomena or the knowledge of the bodhisattva path. Some of this knowledge is to be accepted and some is to be rejected, depending on whether this wisdom is helpful to the bodhisattva path or in contradiction to it. Even though, some of this knowledge of the foundation has to be rejected by a bodhisattva, its essence is still wisdom (Tib. *sherab*). It is still wisdom, even though it is not the wisdom concerned with the path and its results. Therefore it belongs to the knowledge of the foundation.

A. NOT REMAINING IN SAMSARA BECAUSE OF WISDOM

The causal condition which makes us remain in samsara is ignorance or confusion. The bodhisattvas realize the paramita (perfection of wisdom) and this enables them to understand the nature of all phenomena, thus overcoming ignorance and its result, samsara. In the same way, the shravakas and the pratyekabuddhas because of their wisdom are able to leave samsara behind.

B. NOT REMAINING IN PEACE BECAUSE OF COMPASSION

Shravakas and pratyekabuddhas achieve their goal of individual liberation and are content to be arhats. It is only the bodhisattvas who are driven by their compassion not to remain in the peaceful state, but to help all beings.

The bodhisattva is not absorbed in samsara or absorbed in the peace of nirvana because in the accumulation of wisdom of the path, he or she see the equality of samsara and nirvana. The bodhisattvas go beyond these extremes of worldliness and transcendent peace because they realize that they are both equally empty. This is very subtle and because it transcends both samsara and peace, we call this "the supreme perfection of wisdom."

C-D. REMOTENESS AND SKILLFUL MEANS OF BODHISATTVAS

Generally, all the levels of dharma practice help us develop wisdom. This understanding is good, but there are many kinds of understanding that we must develop. Some of these paths lead us quickly to Buddhahood (the near path) and some pathslead us more slowly which we call the remote path. In particular, the wisdom coming from the shravaka and pratyekabuddhas is called the more "remote wisdom." The wisdom of the bodhisattvas, however, is the most effective and is called the "direct wisdom" because it carries us more rapidly to Buddhahood. The bodhisattva unites wisdom and compassion, wisdom and skillful means, and it is through this that they can traverse the path rapidly. For bodhisattvas the remote wisdom is not adopted because it takes so much time to go along the path.

E. UNFAVORABLE THINGS (OBSTACLES)

There are a number of unfavorable things in our practice, particularly, the five skandhas of form, feeling, contact, formation, and consciousness. If we have attachment to them and solidify these as intellectual realities, we have embraced something which is unfavorable to our spiritual development. Once we solidify emptiness into a concept, we slow down our development. Similarly,

if we take the three times of past, present, and future and solidify them it also becomes unfavorable. This is true for all the realizations that we have: the practice of the six paramitas and the meditation that we engage in. If we solidify these and are attached to them, they will become obstacles to our practice.

F. REMEDYING FORCES (REMEDIES FOR THE OBSTACLES)

After identifying the obstacles we must identify the remedy for these obstacles. When we practice the paramitas, we practice them with the light of great wisdom so we don't fall prey to this solidification and this involvement in intellectualization. When we practice moral conduct, we don't become involved with the idea of someone who is keeping the discipline. When we practice patience, we don't become involved with the idea, "I am practicing patience." So enlightened wisdom that realizes the actual nature of reality keeps us from falling into these traps.

When helping others, we must also develop this impartial attitude. We must practice generosity without an idea of a giver, something to give, and someone receiving the gift. We must also help others to cultivate their own generosity and help them to practice beyond these three aspects of giving by realizing their emptiness. When we teach others moral conduct of the paramitas, we must teach them not to become involved with "I."

As soon as there is attachment or a crystallization of an idea, we are faced with an obstacle to our practice and this obstacle must be removed for us to progress. This applies to all ideas including the idea of perfect Buddhahood, that is, to become too attached to this idea. This attachment must be removed with the remedy of very profound wisdom and understanding.

Even if our practice is very well established and we are in a very good place of practice, we don't need to capitalize on the idea of "I am purifying this."

G. THE APPLICATION OF EMPTINESS

Now how do we apply ourselves to emptiness and to the mahayana path? It has four points: the basis of characteristics, characteristics

such as impermanence, whether it is the support of qualities or not, and all one does.

The first is how we are to apply ourselves to emptiness. We do this by not focusing on form and so on. Normally, in the dharma we define form as the object to be perceived by our various consciousnesses. Form is the object of visual consciousness, sounds are objects of our hearing consciousness, odors the object of our olfactory consciousness and so on. We really need to relate properly to them to be able to integrate ourselves with emptiness. The proper relation is that we don't consider them as truly existent, that is, we see they're empty.

Second, but we also don't think "that is suffering" or "that has impermanent nature" or "that is selfless and empty." We just realize the empty nature without any clinging whatsoever.

Third, to integrate ourself with true emptiness is a question of resting in the essence of phenomena called dharmadhatu. It does not matter if the object is known as empty nor not known. Its true nature is changeless and unaffected by interrelationships one has with it. It is by integrating ourself with that empty essence that we achieve the realization.

Fourth, what we need is complete lack of attachment. Whether there is realization or no realization, whether the object is empty or not empty, we should let go of all attachment which will pervert our application.

H. THE EQUALITY OF EMPTINESS AND FORM

The next aspect is the equality of form and emptiness. We realize the empty nature of form and other sensory experiences so that they are no longer crystallized into something substantial with an independent nature. Once we go beyond that we realize the empty nature of the form which manifests. So form is emptiness.

This emptiness is not only the emptiness of form, but it is the emptiness of the nature that manifests as form. We need to know that the emptiness is not a thing that exists by itself. Second, there is no form that doesn't have this empty nature. There is no emptiness which manifests as form. All these points can be summarized in four simple statements: Form is emptiness; Emptiness is form; There is

no other form than emptiness; There is no emptiness apart from form.

When we realize this sameness of form, we can see that this manifests in all of the five skandhas of form, feeling, discrimination, mental arisings, and consciousness. We see this sameness in all areas of manifestation.

I. THE PATH OF INSIGHT OF SHRAVAKAS

The next point concerns the path of insight in terms of the skandhas. This is the third time we have looked at the path of insight. In the first topic of this book the path of insight was discussed mainly as a causal conditions for omniscience to emerge. In the second topic we looked at it as the path of insight as knowledge of the path. In this third topic the path of insight is discussed in relation to the shravaka level of insight which is the foundation.

The shravakas have one focus of attention which are the four Noble Truths. Whether it is the path of accumulation, junction, insight, cultivation, or the final path of no more learning, each is related to the four Noble Truths for the shravakas. The insight of shravaka is very genuine insight into the meaning of the Four Noble Truths. When we look in more detail into the path of insight we see that it has sixteen stages which are called 'moments.' These sixteen are divided into four insights into each of the four noble truths.

1. THE TRUTH OF SUFFERING

The first Noble Truth is the truth of suffering. The first insight is to understand the impermanent nature of conditioned things. We see how everything is in a state of flux; how nothing lasts; how nothing is stable, how even suffering is impermanent. The second insight is focused on the actual suffering which has three kinds of suffering: the suffering of suffering, the suffering of change, and inherent suffering.[21] The third insight is into the empty nature of phenomena. The shravaka's understanding of emptiness is not the same as the emptiness from the viewpoint of the mahayana path, but it is an authentic understanding because shravakas see how everything is composite and therefore has no essence. They understand that things

that we perceive are but a conglomeration of smaller things. So a hand, for example, is nothing other than a collection of fingers, skin, flesh, etc. So everything is made up of smaller components and therefore doesn't have an independent existence. The four insights into the first Noble Truth is: impermanence, suffering, emptiness, and nonself of phenomena.

2. THE TRUTH OF ORIGINATION

The second Noble Truth is the origination of suffering which has four main insights: cause, origination, thorough development, and condition. The first insight is to understand the main types of causes. The primary cause is the direct cause such as the primary cause of a flower is a seed. A more subtle cause is that a rose can produce the sensation of happiness (because of its beautiful flowers) or the sensation of pain (because of its thorns). Every situation in our life has causes and our projection of the world and the relationship we have with this world is caused by karma of our own activities. We also know that the cause of the negative karma is due to the various disturbing emotions we possess. So the first insight into the second Noble Truth is to see the causes for what is presently taking place in our life.

The second insight of the second truth is called universal origin of all phenomena. This realization is furthered until we see the entire manifestation of the universe, that everything that we see in the universe is generated by karma and the kleshas. We do not just see that things are a product of karma and kleshas, but we can see that the inner cause within ourselves has created the seed for the whole of the universe.

The third insight of the second truth concerns the generating force meaning that the various manifestations that we experience do not emerge very slowly. We see the tremendous power of karma and we see how it works simply and powerfully. Once the karma is there we see how is it able to produce immediate results and products. The fourth insight is that one understands the actual present conditions which will cause the karmic power to manifest. So one sees how a present circumstance will bring out the karmic consequence and bring out the full development of suffering inherent in that.

3. THE TRUTH OF CESSATION

In the third Noble Truth of cessation also contain four insights. The first insight is into cessation itself meaning that cessation means stopping the disturbing emotions forever. When all the processes of causality have been eliminated, then there will cease to be suffering. The second insight is to know that as soon as the impurities have ceased, through the absence of the defilements, there is tremendous peace and calm. The third insight is that it is not just another state, but it is the most supreme state. The fourth insight is that when one really manages to put a stop to the kleshas and achieve that peace one truly emerges from the ocean of samsara. It gives one definite liberation. So the four insights were cessation, peace, excellence, and definite emergence.

4. THE TRUTH OF THE PATH

There are also four insights into the fourth Noble Truth of the path: the path, intelligence, accomplishment, and definite release. The first insight is to understand that the path is the way to liberation. The second insight is intelligence, to understand what is the correct way and what isn't, what is suitable and a good path and what isn't. It confirms that it is the perfect path. The third insight, accomplishment, means that this power to manifest all the qualities. The fourth insight is called definite emerging because one can see that the path does allow one to be released from everything that is negative or samsaric and that release is a lasting release, not a temporary one.

These are the four insights of the fourth Noble Truth and these then make up the sixteen insights which make up the shravaka's accomplishment of the path of insight.

These sixteen moments as they are called make up the foundation for the Bodhisattva's insight. But the bodhisattva goes beyond what the shravakas do because the shravakas take these things as too real and take them for having too much substantiality or real. The bodhisattvas avoids both errors of asserting too strongly or denying to strongly.

If we take the first insight of the truth of suffering, as an example the shravaka understands the impermanence of phenomena which contrasts with ordinary beings who believe that things are real, solid, and permanent. What the bodhisattva does is transcend the idea of permanence and impermanence. If we take the second insight whereas the shravaka sees the suffering of samsara, ordinary beings do not see this suffering but believe happiness can be fulfilled with samsara. The bodhisattva, however, neither crystallizes suffering too much nor does he or she crystallize happiness too much in the worldly sense. We can apply this logic to the sixteen points and we can appreciate that the bodhisattva because of not doting to much on reality with these sixteen points and the sixteen points of remedy to these points has an attitude which transcends the thirty-two possible areas of thought.

Questions

Question: How can we practice without developing this involvement that has been discussed?

Rinpoche: The key to not getting involved is to try to cultivate our understanding the three circles of the doer, something done, and a receiver of the action. Ordinary beings cannot do that totally but at the same time if we try to understand three circles through logic and try to go deeper into it, we will be able to understand it and then we will be able to practice transcending this very strong idea of solidification that we have.

At first it may appear contradictory that we want to develop aspiration to practice and that we also want to try to reduce our idea of practice as being something real and solid. But when we examine it closely, rather than being any contradiction, we find that these two things work very nicely together. The whole problem is one of suffering and we are suffering because we are deluded. That delusion comes about because we are ignorant. When we want to understand what is taking place and we want the delusion and consequent suffering to finish, that is the aspiration to practice. As we begin to understand that delusion, we see that it is due to ignorance that is intimately linked with the solidification of the idea of our delusions. We can see our efforts are to remove that

solidification and we don't want to make that solidification of reality even stronger. We can see also that our striving can work hand-in-hand with trying to understand what is taking place.

Question: I don't see how we can develop such a pure motivation when our mind has any impure ideas.

Rinpoche: When we examine our motivation especially at the beginning, we find most of the time we are uninspired and there is not much to rejoice about. Even though that is true, it is extremely useful to examine ourself and then to change our way of thinking for the better. If we don't examine our mind and learn how it works and discover what is drawing us to do negative things, we will never change. It is therefore important to see if our motivation is good or bad and to think and try to change our motivation. If we do this without getting lost in a constant analysis of self, then we will progress from one level to the next until our useless habits can be left behind.

At the same time we receive advice from friends, advice from our lama, and meditates on karma and results. The advice these people give us should help that first process of looking at our mind. Also examining our self helps us understand how we can help others.

Question: How does this fit with working with one's children?

Rinpoche: When we are trying to cultivate our understanding and also to bring up our children, then we are trying to reduce our attachment. But we have to make a judgement of involvement and love and compassion. When we get rid of our involvement, it doesn't mean we get rid of our love and compassion. In practical terms we are have great love and sympathy for the children and when we are trying to reduce involvement we know not to solidify that reality. Because of our great love and compassion, we teach the children whatever dharma we can and by setting an example of love and compassion in the context of not being over involved.

Chapter 12

The Application of Realization of All Aspects

TOPIC IV. THE APPLICATION OF REALIZATION OF ALL ASPECTS

The first three topics concerned wisdom and we have seen that the first topic had 10 key points, the second topic had 11, and the third topic had 9 making 30 key points in all. The next four topics will deal with application. This chapter is how we apply ourselves to the path.

A. ASPECTS

The first topic of this section is called the aspects and covers all the points of the first three major sections, but from a fruition standpoint. The first major topic, the knowledge of omniscience, is analyzed in three parts making up 37 topics for the first part, 34 topics for the second part and 39 topics for the third part. The second major topic, the knowledge of the path was made up of 36 topics. In the third topic, the knowledge of the foundation, there are 27 topics to the four Noble Truths. Adding these together we have a total of 173 topics and these are actually listed under this section called "aspects."

concerning the fruition of Buddhahood and putting these all together there are 173 topics. These 173 aspects are listen under the first point called "aspects."

B. APPLICATION OF PRACTICE

Next is the actual application of practice and it lists twenty different approaches to practice. But before we look at these actual modes of

practice, we must consider the person who is able to firstly listen to the Prajnaparamita teachings, secondly adopt them and thirdly maintain them.

1. THE SUITABLE VESSEL (THE PRACTITIONER)

A suitable vessel for listening[22] to the Prajnaparamita must have three characteristics. Firstly, this person must have strong faith and devotion to the Buddha and really rely on him. This conviction in the Buddha will make one's mind receptive to the Prajnaparamita teachings. The second point is one will accumulate virtue and gather goodness about oneself because of the inspiration. The third point is that after the Buddha's passing away, one can't meet the Buddha personally and so one receives the practice advise from a spiritual friend. So resorting to the Buddha, accumulating virtue, and turning to a spiritual friend are the three things necessary for us to become a suitable vessel for listening to the teachings.

Next we have to adopt the vessel for the teachings by placing our trust in the Buddha. After placing our trust in the Buddha, we need to think about the teachings and question them and resolve our doubts so that we can develop an unambiguous result.

Then we need to integrate these teachings by making the six paramitas a living part of our life and putting those paramitas into practice. So we have three vessels: the vessel of listening to the teachings the vessel of adoption, and the vessel of integration. In the vessel of the person listening there are three points, the vessel of adoption two points, the vessel of integration one point making a total of six points. It is through these six subtopics that we understand the actual person who is applying him or herself to the practice.

2. THE ACTUAL PRACTICE

There are twenty things we need to do in our practice. First, we have to apply ourself to emptiness by understanding that form and all the other aspects of apparent existent do not have a true and stable reality of their own. In the first mode of application we come to understand their emptiness.

In the second mode of application we come to understand that emptiness which is the true nature of things is quite profound. Sometimes we have to meditate on something, sometimes we have to meditate without something. Sometimes we consider that they are there, sometimes that they are not there. It is not straightforward where we can say that the true nature is this and this. Rather we approach it in many different ways which often seem contradictory but actually there is no problem because there is a certain amount of work on the relative level and that is why we do all these modes of practice while on the ultimate level there is nothing to achieve. When we understand we have these two levels of relative and ultimate working together there is no problem. Third, we must understand that emptiness is even more profound than it seemed at first. Fourth, emptiness is that it is even more subtle so the second, third, and fourth points are that we go to a more and more profound understanding.

The fifth point of the twenty modes of application is that in order to gain actual insight into that which is so profound one needs to practice for a long time and to practice extensively.

Sixth, when one has practiced long and extensively, one develops such a profound state that one sees the Buddha and the Buddha predicts how that will be.[23]

The seventh application is that having received the predictions of the Buddha, one is placed on a path that one cannot slip back on. This is the nonreturning aspect of the practice.

Eighth, through extensive efforts of the first seven points, we will obtain release from samsara. Ninth, because of the certain release of the eighth application, there will no longer be any obstacles that have the power to interfere with one's progress. The tenth application is called "closing in" because when one reaches this level of application, one is closing in on Buddhahood.

The eleventh application is "swiftly obtaining the end result" meaning that at this point Buddhahood comes about quickly. The twelfth application is perfecting our beneficial activities for other beings. The thirteenth application is "there is no increase" meaning that there is no increase in the good qualities and abilities of an enlightened person. Obviously, on the relative level of reality there is a tremendous increase of good qualities and powers at these high

levels and a great diminishing of the negative qualities at this level of practice. However, on the ultimate level there is not increase in these qualities taking place.

The fourteen application is that there is no "decrease" meaning there is no decrease in the good qualities and abilities and this parallels the thirteen application. Fifteenth is "no longer seeing dharma or nondharma." This means that at this level we no longer see things in term of that which is most desirable or excellent (dharma) and that which is inferior (nondharma). The insight we have into the true nature which transcends these ideas of dharma and nondharma, one's vision no longer crystallizes ideas in that way.

The sixteenth application is understanding how inconceivable form and the other skandhas (feeling, discrimination, formation, and consciousness) are. In the light of the true nature we experience the manifestation of form and it is inconceivable because in the indiscriminate there are discriminate things which appear.

The seventeenth application deals with how we no longer intellectually perceive any characteristics for form and the other skandhas so we no longer ascribes intellectual labels to the other skandhas as being this and that quality. Because of the previous seventeen applications, we attain the most precious result and reach the end of our evolution in the eighteenth application. The nineteenth application shows how pure what we are achieving actually is in terms of being free of mental or emotional alloys that could be spoiling it.

The twentieth application shows how things go from better to even better. Particularly, through the profound bodhisattva levels we obtain this amazing purity going from excellent to more excellent to even more excellent.

C. THE (POSITIVE) QUALITIES

When we reflect on the qualities, it is of vital importance is to open oneself to the blessing of the Buddha. The Buddha and his great love and care is universal embracing all beings. It is not as though the mind of the Buddha was just directed towards a few of his students and he cared only for them and that they were the only ones capable of following him. But as we know the Buddha's love, concern, and

care spreads out to touch all beings, who are endless because they go to the very ends of space.

So from the Buddha, there is the ever present radiation of his blessing, and to open oneself to it depends not on what the Buddha can do, but what we can do. So even though the Buddha's blessing touches everyone, it doesn't have in itself the power to mature them, just like that, to help beings whether they wish it or not. Whether one gets the benefit of Buddha's blessing or not, depends on one's own openness and receptivity. This openness depends very much on the amount of aspiration and faith that one has, and the amount of confidence that one places in the Buddha and his teachings. If one places great confidence in the Buddha and his teachings and aspires to be like him, then this will cause one to become more and more open and receptive. This receptivity will then enable the wonderful meaning of the Buddha's teaching to become part of one, and it's through that inspiration that one will practice the six paramitas and so forth. An example illustrating this openness is the sun. When the sun shines, its light falls everywhere on the earth and on the planets. If you have a cave that has an entrance which faces south, it will receive the fullness of the sun's heat, light and warmth. But if the mouth of the cave faces north, then even though the sun is shining all the time, it will always be in the shadow. Similarly, even though the sunlight of the Buddha's blessing is always there, whether they benefit us or not depends on how receptive we are.

That same process becomes even more powerful, and after the first thing of opening oneself to the Buddha's blessing, there comes an actual penetration, so that one is actually embraced by the Buddha's qualities, let us say, so that what takes place is that one needs confidence in the Buddha and his teachings, and through that one will practice. As a result of the practice and cultivation of the paramitas, one will receive an actual contact with the powerful qualities of the Buddha and his teachings. Those things will become a manifest part of one's own practice and experience. One has a much deeper contact with the power of the Buddha to teach and the qualities. This is a much deeper level of quality than, first of all, opening oneself to the authenticity of the Buddha's teaching.

Although, there is a list of fourteen different qualities of the application mentioned here, such as that one gets close to

Buddhahood, that there are untainted qualities and so on., we will not discuss them individually.

D. THE FAULTS (THE PROBLEMS IN PRACTICE)

In one's practice there are all kinds of problems and these depend very much on the individual concerned. There are some people who are very slow and dull-witted, and they have a particular kind of problem to overcome in their practice. Some people are sharp-witted, maybe even too sharp-witted, and they have a problem to overcome. Some have a physical difficulties and some have mental problems which they need to conquer. All of these different styles need to be sorted out. For instance, the dull-witted will take a long time to grasp the point and mature and progress. The only way they can manage to progress is a tremendous amount of diligence and to apply themselves again and again and go through even greater hardships in their practice. If they do that, they will achieve the result. So what they need is very intense application. More sharp-witted people may have great understanding and generally speaking they can progress very quickly, but sometimes that sort of person will become proud and lazy, because they understand things quite easily. They will slow down and they get very proud, thinking "I have this quality and that quality." These things also constitute a problem that needs to be overcome by working very diligently on oneself.

Sometimes one feels quite ill at ease or has a physical problem. Because of that one feels no inclination to practice and doesn't practice. These problems constitute an obstacle to one's development and needs to be overcome. There are also mental obstacles which can arise which stops one from penetrating to a very clear meditation, very clear state of understanding and realization. Sometimes this comes through agitation or through torpor or through distraction, but one's mind is not very flexible and peaceful, just not as workable as it should be. These physical or mental conditions are obstacles, inasmuch as they stop one applying oneself to an understanding of Prajnaparamita in the twenty ways that we saw in the last section. Because they take us away from it, they are faults which need to be removed.

These various problems, whether they be mental or physical need to be eliminated. The first step is to be very clear-minded about what does actually constitutes a problem to one's practice, so that one knows what has to be gotten rid of. So when this physical uneasiness or mental distraction or lethargy comes about, then it is very vital not to associate it as being a good thing. Sometimes one can become involved with those states, and it seems like it's the right thing. This is a very big mistake of interpreting what is really a fault to be a positive quality. So one needs to recognize a fault as a fault, know that it's a problem to be eliminated and then to strive to eliminate it. The same applies to the positive qualities. So if we are in a wrong state of mind, we can mistake good qualities for negative ones. One needs to be very clear about a quality and then to work very hard to increase those qualities. When they finally do emerge one needs to feel very joyful.

E. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF PRAJNAPARAMITA

This topic is called simply "characteristics" meaning the characteristic of the Prajnaparamita itself. The Prajnaparamita is the object of our study and this needs to be integrated into one's own existence and made part of one's realization. Actually, the Prajnaparamita has really only one characteristic, it has one nature. But because Prajnaparamita is of such importance in our development, it is treated here through four principal characteristics. Once we know the characteristics, these key features of Prajnaparamita, we'll be able to get a very proper balanced picture of Prajnaparamita to integrate into ourselves.

The first characteristic of Prajnaparamita deals with the very essence. We find that the Prajnaparamita is concerned with the very essence of phenomena. We know that all of the suffering, the problems, hardships, and the confusion of samsara can be traced to the root, ignorance. Because of ignorance, there is delusion. Once there is delusion, then the whole complex of samsaric problems start to happen. When we try to understand what is happening, understand how the illusion can happen, what the illusion is. More than that to find what is it that is not deluded, what is it which is clear and proper within oneself. It is the Prajnaparamita which helps us to

discover that. In particular, it helps us to find the very essence, the very heart nature which is free from the delusion. So the first point is that it is intimately concerned with this very essence of things.

The second characteristic of Prajnaparamita shows us the superiority of the Prajnaparamita. When one acts in this world of objects and things and ideas, which are already the product of delusion and one's ignorance, then whatever one achieves if one looks in a very global way, is not really that worthwhile. It doesn't have any essence to it, it has not much meaning. However, when we cultivate Prajnaparamita, we are going beyond the delusion and ignorance and are coming to terms with the truth. This truth has a lasting, useful result, because the Prajnaparamita is such an excellent and superior teaching. If the prajnaparamita is present in what we do, then the result is really worthwhile. If it's not there, then its fairly worthless.

The third characteristic of the Prajnaparamita is knowledge. The Prajnaparamita is not dull or unclear, but rather it is seeing clearly the way things are. Through the power of Prajnaparamita one actually understands things, it has the quality of realization.

The fourth characteristic of the Prajnaparamita is that of most complete function. It is through the Prajnaparamita that we can achieve our own benefit, that we can understand and get rid of the suffering, the kleshas, and so on and develop the different qualities. Prajnaparamita wisdom will also enable us to achieve the benefit of others, to help and guide them. It is mainly through wisdom, through understanding how things are, that we develop the motivation, to help others. So at the very root of all these, we can say the Prajnaparamita has the very best function.

F. IN AGREEMENT WITH LIBERATION

The sixth topic deals with the first path of accumulation. The stage of accumulation is sometimes called the stage that leads to or is leads to or is in harmony with liberation. This is liberation from samsara, liberation from one's defilements. Final liberation, of course, can only happen at Buddhahood. From the viewpoint of the shravakas and pratyekabuddhas, liberation is when one becomes an arhat. But on the second path of junction, one has already attained

obtained some preliminary liberation. Defilements will have lost their power and one will be free from the sufferings of the lower realms. What makes it happen is the first stage of accumulation. It's what one does on that level that really sets the wheels in motion for one overcome one's negativity, one's ignorance, one's defilements, to get out of the very tight mesh of samsara. So that is why the path of accumulation is called "in agreement with liberation."

1. THE ESSENCE OF THE PATH OF ACCUMULATION

On this first path we are trying to understand the emptiness of phenomena in order to free ourself. So in the beginning we are very involved with things, we are very attached to our ideas of reality and to the apparent realities themselves. To break through that attachment, we need to understand the *three circles* (Tib. xx) of subject, object, and their relationship. On the path of accumulation we already studied what that means, we become familiar with the idea, and we contemplate quite deeply the meaning of this absence of the three circles. Through that we become able to understand absence of characteristics and see of the heart of that is wisdom. As we become more familiar with this way of acting beyond subject, object and their relationship, we achieve the six paramitas. When we have the understanding of the three circles, then in the light of that understanding, we will practice generosity, skillful conduct, forbearance, diligence, meditation, and cultivate our wisdom. Because we no longer believe things to be solid, we can practice the paramitas very much better than before. Because of this understanding, we can practice much more vastly and much more effectively. Through that understanding, we gain realization of all 173 principal aspects of the Prajnaparamita. It's because of our very skillful practice that we come to grips with all of those various aspects. They begin to become familiar.

2. THE QUALITIES NEEDED FOR LIBERATION

The first quality is to have faith in the three jewels; confidence in the Buddha, because we appreciate just what a rare and excellent state Buddhahood is. We come to understand the magnificence of that

state, we long to achieve it and we gear the whole of our existence towards liberating ourself. Likewise we turn to the dharma, which are the teachings of the Buddha, and to the sangha, who are the friends on the path. If we really don't have this faith in Buddhahood, we will not have much feeling for the dharma that the Buddha gave. Likewise, if we don't have very much confidence in the dharma, we won't have much confidence in the teachers who hold those teachings or friends who show us the path.

However, if we do have very strong faith in the Buddha, then we will realize the great value of the teachings and assimilate them. Then we will turn to those very rare friends, who enable us to understand the teachings and open the meaning of the teachings to us. This faith is not blind faith, but a faith based on understanding and appreciation. So faith in the three jewels is the seed from which will sprout all of the other qualities.

The second quality is diligence. The text says that we need to have diligence in the object, meaning that rather than just practicing the most excellent path of the dharma from time to time we need to apply ourself wholeheartedly to the practice of dharma. Of course, if someone does bits of practice here and there, there will be some result from it, and there may even be some tangible result that we can see in this very life. But practically we are stuck with the backlog of karma and mental conditioning that we have created for many, many lives. There is a lot of work to do, a lot of obstacles to remove so we need to apply ourselves fully to the excellent path of the dharma.

Third, we need the best attitude, which means our motivation should be at the very highest, most noble quality. That means that the motivation behind what we do needs to be very beneficial. It should also be a very large view naturally on a very vast and grand scale. Of course, we cannot change our conditioning overnight and all of our motivation. But as much as we can, we can bear in mind the nobility of such an attitude and motivation, and through mindfulness, try to integrate this and make that part of us.

The fourth quality is nonconceptual samadhi. We all feel that we have control over our own mind, but really when we look at the situation, we don't really have control over our own mind. If we had, if we wanted to practice what is good and achieve the qualities, then

we could simply do it. If we wanted to get rid of all of the bad things and the obstacles, if we had control over our mind, then we could simply do so. Of course, the real situation is not like that because we don't have control over our mind. If we want to rest in meditation, then we don't have enough control to simply do it. So we really need to get to the heart of the problem, to be in control of our mind. The thing which helps to do that is to rest in nonconceptual meditation or samadhi.

The fifth quality we need is omniscience. We are still talking about the path of accumulation and it is on that path that we begin to acquire such wisdom, and we acquire that wisdom of hearing, of contemplation, and of meditation. First, we hear[24] (or study) the teachings of the sutras and shastras and we become familiar with the ideas of the dharma. This first stage is called the stage of listening. In the next stage we think very deeply about the meaning of what we're studying trying to come to a much deeper understanding. This is called the contemplation stage of wisdom. As we familiarize ourselves with the true meaning, and particularly through meditation, we come to the meditation stage of wisdom. The three steps of listening, contemplation, and meditation, give rise to the wisdom of the true nature of phenomena.

Those five support the Bodhisattva's progress through the stage of accumulation: confidence in the three jewels, diligence, mindfulness or the very best attitude, samadhi, and wisdom. For someone who has these five qualities it is relatively easy to gain realization of the Buddha's teaching. Someone for whom these qualities have not yet manifested will require much more work in order to progress and gain realization.

So the people with sharp faculties find it relatively easy to achieve realization, and those with the blunt faculties find it much more difficult. But sharp or blunt faculties, shouldn't be taken too absolutely. We may examine ourselves closely and find that our mind and find that we have a very good faith and confidence in the Buddha's teaching, we are very diligent, we are very mindful of what is a noble attitude, we are to a large extent a master of our mind, and can enter into meditation and cultivate wisdom. This is a person described as one with sharp faculties. On the other hand if our mind and existence and find that we've little confidence in the

three jewels, with only a smattering of diligence, with not very much nobility of mind, not much power to meditate, and not much wisdom. However, we are stuck with blunt faculties forever, and this will always be like that. It's not so solid a situation because we can transform ourself from a blunt person to a sharp-witted person. We can transform ourself from being quite a dull and blunt person into a very sharp and workable person.

This chapter has covered the path of accumulation, which in the text is called the path well in accord with liberation.

Questions

Question: Can't this detailed analysis suffocate any insight we might have on the path?
Rinpoche: Later on in the path when we reach profound realization, then things will happen on their own accord and there will be a natural evolution in our practice. To get to this high level, however, we need to understand the Prajnaparamita very well. To understand the Prajnaparamita, the best thing we can do is to understand the path extremely clearly which is what we are doing here. If we meditate and study these points, then gradually there will arise clarity about the Prajnaparamita and our understanding will increase. This in turn will help our meditation and realization to develop naturally. But if we just wait for them from the very beginning to arise on their own accord, they will never return.

Question: How was the Prajnaparamita taught in Tibet?
Rinpoche: In Tibet, there was a union of the vast tradition of the sutras and the profound tradition of the tantras. These two worked hand-in-hand and reinforced each other. These days people associate Tibet more than anything with the vajrayana, just as they associate Ceylon with the Theravada tradition.

Even though Tibet was such a perfect home where the vajrayana was kept intact and pure, we should know that in Tibet there was a joint practice of the tantras and sutras. The tantras contain very profound techniques, so the tantras are usually called the profound approach to dharma. The sutras contained all of the possible

information and discourses, and they are very vast and comprehensive, so they are called "the vast approach."

One should never underestimate how much these two traditions can benefit each other. It is through what one understands of the vast sutra tradition that one's vajrayana practice really becomes meaningful, and it is through the vajrayana techniques and skillful means that one can actually traverse all these stages of understanding of the path that we read about in the Prajnaparamita.

What we are doing here is going through the whole Prajnaparamita very quickly. The actual Prajnaparamita is in 100,000 verses and if we were to work our way through it very thoroughly in terms of academic understanding and deepening that to an actual realization through practice, it would take years. So what we rather do is to get some idea of the Prajnaparamita through this extremely condensed form of the Prajnaparamita. We cover the various points of the development of this wisdom are and then when we practice vajrayana, those very skillful means will enable us to develop quickly. This teaching is to give us the means to gain the realization, gain the understanding, rather than just doing the technique in the dark, not knowing why we're doing it or quite what results will be. This study helps our tantric practice, because we know there is a very great meaning behind it. It's not just something we do because it's there to be done. It is very good to grasp the essence of Prajnaparamita through this sort study, even though it is so concise.

Question: Why is the varjayana also called the "secret mantrayana" path?

Rinpoche: The word in Tibetan that we translate into English as "vajrayana" is *sang nga*. The first syllable is translated by many scholars as being "secret." The second syllable *nga* means "mantra" so people translate it as the "secret mantrayana tradition" for "the vajrayana." I believe this word "secret" doesn't really give the right impression, because it gives the impression of something which is very esoteric, that cannot be passed on to others. That's not really the point. The tone of the syllable *sang* implies much more, something which is vital, that is a key factor rather than something which is secret.

If you've got a car, for instance, then the vital point in the car is the motor, because it's the engine which determines how quickly you get to the place you're going. With the vajrayana, then what we're doing is to develop and awaken the most vital factors for a quick progress, so we develop in the most effective way the very essence of the development stage of meditation and the perfection stage of meditation, and we learn how to work with things in the very best way. It's this feeling of getting to the very pith of things, generating the very best of all things, touching the very nerve of what is most useful to our practice that this first word *sang* conveys much more than some sort of esoteric sense.

Chapter 13

The Path of Junction

G. IN AGREEMENT WITH DEFINITE EMERGING

In our efforts to help all beings, we are studying in particular the Prajnaparamita. Because the Prajnaparamita can is the wisdom that gives rise to the Buddhas rise to enlightenment, it is called "the mother of all the Buddhas" or "the Great Mother." First the Prajnaparamita arise all the good qualities of the shravakas and the pratyekabuddhas as well, so it is the Great Mother gives birth to the entire Buddhist path. We study the Prajnaparamita so that we can achieve Buddhahood. To do this, we need to get some idea of the significance of the Prajnaparamita which we can do through contemplation.

The whole foundation of the Prajnaparamita is the most immaculate teaching of the Buddha. But because the Buddha's teachings are so vast and comprehensive, we are studying here a very concise form of the Prajnaparamita, namely, the *Abhisamaya-lankara* of Maitreya. It gives us point by point introduction, so that we can have a clear picture of the overall meaning of Prajnaparamita. So we should think that by study the *Abhisamaya-lankara* we are here studying the Prajnaparamita as a vital part of our own progress toward Buddhahood.

In the last chapter we covered the path of accumulation. In this chapter look at the path of junction. We have already studied the path of junction in each of the first three chapters. We may wonder why we are repeating ourselves, but in fact it is not the same as before. In the first topic, the knowledge of omniscience, the path of junction was treated mainly as a cause, a foundation. In the second topic, knowledge of the path, we looked at the path of junction, applies to practice. In the third topic, knowledge of the foundation, we also studied the path of junction, but in terms of the shravakas'

path of junction. In this fourth topic, when we study the path of junction, we will look more comprehensively at the way the bodhisattva's approach and work on the path of junction.

While the bodhisattva are progressing through these stages, they are not just concerned with those who are very close to them, one's own family, one's brothers, sisters, loved one, and friends in the same town or in the same country, or the same race or even the same species as themselves. Bodhisattvas rather are concerned with helping all of these sentient beings. We may think that a bodhisattva should help everyone they meet, for instance, but that would still only cover a few beings that that they experience within their own subjective reality. There will be many fishes under the water, many birds and animals in remote places that one would never meet. Beside that there are many beings beyond our realms of perception (such as hungry ghosts and hell beings). The bodhisattvas are so devoted to the practice because they are concerned for absolutely every sentient being. They work for all of those sentient beings because they love them and they have great compassion for them.

Besides having love and compassion for every sentient being and being concerned for them, that the love and compassion is equal for all sentient beings. The bodhisattvas see all the beings as equal. For that reason they are working for all of them. Then the bodhisattva loves them equally oneself. So they do not give their love and compassion more to some and less to others, but give the maximum of their love and compassion to absolutely all sentient beings. That is the main object of their attention as they go through this stage of junction. This even and impartial attitude towards all beings will be examined through ten aspects.

The first aspect of this stage of junction of the bodhisattva's love is the sameness or equality(Tib. *nyam pa*)[25] of the love. The bodhisattva helps beings as much as possible to help them achieve the happiness and help them to become free from the suffering. This is the same towards each and every being.

The second aspect is the equality in their desire to benefit others. The way the bodhisattvas help others is to protect them from harm, from fear, and to give them shelter and positive aid. They do this very evenly with the same attitude towards everyone, not favoring

some, not excluding others from the way that they benefit and protect.

The third aspect is that a bodhisattva has no aggression or hatred, whether someone is friendly or whether someone trying to hurt them. Obviously, they would feel no hatred for those who are sympathetic, but even though someone is very difficult, they still have this same even mind in which hatred doesn't arise. Hatred Wishing to harm others and thoughts of revenge would only produce more suffering which is therefore pointless. It only gives rise to problems. Therefore the bodhisattvas do not develop hatred towards anyone. Because they have no hatred, they do not harm beings by either physical or verbal actions, and this is shown in the next two aspects.

The fourth aspect is their equality of nonviolence, not harming, so this is a physical aspect of not doing harm to anyone, either for selfish reasons or in retaliation.

The fifth point is not saying anything damaging with either very angry or harsh speech, bad speech of any sort aimed at hurting others. They neither speak nastily nor wish to speak nastily. So those are the first five of the ten ways in which they are very even or impartial towards other beings.

The following five aspects show how the bodhisattvas on the path of junction relate to beings. Sixth, they consider them as very kind like their own mother and father. Seventh, they think of them with very great affection, like one thinks of one's brothers and sisters, so one feels there's some brotherly bond with beings. Eighth, through developing their love they consider beings to be like their children, so in the same way that one cares for children, the bodhisattva cultivates love to care for other beings. Ninth, they love other beings like close friends and family, have the feelings of sameness, this sort of family link, this general oneness. Tenth, they have a constant unrelenting care for everyone, just like one has for one's kin. In the same way that one never lets one's kin drop, one has this feeling of obligation, feeling of wanting to help no matter what. Then they also this feeling for sentient beings. With those five types of ideas then, they have this equality of love.

These last five thoughts showed the equality of thinking for beings. Altogether we had ten ways in which we consider the

sameness of the Bodhisattva's love and approach on the level of the path of junction

H. IRREVERSIBLE PATHS

The eighth topic deals with the way in which the bodhisattvas are nonreturners, meaning they do not fall back. This applies to the path of junction, the path of insight, and the path of cultivation.

When one reaches this path of junction, one will never fall through the power of karma into the lower realms, so there is already a definitive stage of progress. Through one's own karmic power, one has gone beyond the possibility of being born into the lower realms. It's something that's quite automatic, because to reach that level of junction, one needs to remove the results in terms of karma, which would normally cause one to be reborn in the lower realms. Also on that level, one has removed the worst of the klesha, the mental defilements, which are in themselves the cause for being reborn in the lower realms. So in terms of cause and effect, then one has gone beyond the possibility of rebirth in the lower realms and through karma, through great love and compassion in order to help other beings, those bodhisattvas might opt to take birth in a lower state in order to be of benefit, but it's not just through the uncontrollable power of karma.

When one reaches the stage of insight, then at that level, one gains the real understanding into the true nature of phenomena. Because of that, automatically, one joins the ranks of those called the realized beings or very noble beings, who have this understanding of the true nature. Because that experience is lasting and awakening, one can never fall back to the state of an ordinary being. This word "ordinary being" applies to all those who have not had the realization of the true nature. So we have the state of nonreturning, with this path of insight. Then with the path of cultivation one cultivates this insight, one meditates on it to make it all-embracing, and one traverses the bodhisattva levels. With each progress through the levels, one gets rid of an even more subtle level of blockage, and one obtains more qualities. As one progresses, each step is a nonreturning step, so one keeps the qualities. One never

falls back to that grosser level of things to be gotten rid of. So we can see how the bodhisattvas in those three stages are nonreturners.

I. THE APPLICATION OF THE EQUALITY OF SAMSARA AND NIRVANA

The next topic concerns the equality of existence and peace, which are two epithets for samsara and nirvana. When we are progressing through the irreversible paths, there will be certain signs. One of these is that we will understand the equality, the sameness, of samsara and nirvana. This sameness means that they have the same nature. Before the path of junction it was very important to work within the relative level of samsara and nirvana. As long as one is under the power of delusion and experiencing that delusion, then it is of prime importance to want to become free of samsara, which has the very nature of suffering. It is very important to aspire and work for nirvana, which is freedom from the suffering. But when one has gone beyond the grip of the delusion, then one needs to know that there is a sameness of the manifestation of samsara, which is the suffering aspect of mind and the manifestation of nirvana, which is the peaceful. We should not project on samsara too solid and immutable a suffering of reality and dote on nirvana as a thing in itself. It is to understand how they are both equal in terms of their actual nature.

We can go back to the example of mistaking the rope for a snake. When we mistake the rope for a snake, we are under the grip of the delusion, and panic and suffer. It's very important to get out of that panic and to reach a state of sanity and realize what is really there. It's really important to appreciate the suffering of being under the delusion and the release of seeing the truth. But as far as what is really there and what's been there all the time, the rope itself, is concerned, then the projection of the delusion and its suffering and the later release of understanding really are something quite superficial. They are not really a part of what is the true nature there. They are both concerned with delusion and release from delusion. So coming back to these beings on the superior levels, these ones who are nonreturners, then they realize the sameness in terms of the quality of experience of samsara and nirvana. In realizing this

equality of samsara and nirvana, one then sees how all phenomena are dreamlike.

The text now deals with a doubt one might have about the undifferentiation of samsara and nirvana. One might be led to think, "Oh well, if they are basically the same thing, then what is the point of striving to obtain liberation, to get rid of suffering, to work on karma, and to cultivate meditation?" One need not entertain such doubts if one understands the interrelationship between the relative and the ultimate truth. When we talk about the sameness of nature, we are looking from a very absolute point of view. We're going to the very deepest nature of phenomena. There we are looking at what has always been and what has never really ever been. Using, the example of the rope, we know that it has always just been a rope. In the relative level, we are looking at what takes place through delusion and how to get rid of it. We're seeing the relative truth and the truth of what takes place on the relative level of delusion: what needs to be done and how to do it. If we look at the example of the rope and the snake, we can see that very well. There has only been the rope there, and the whole process of delusion and the liberation from delusion takes place on the relative level, in terms of a relative subject relating to that rope. We can eliminate our fear because there was never a real snake there (on the ultimate level). It's only because it is a delusion on the relative level of thinking it's a snake that we can eliminate our fear. Delusions can be removed and that results in subsequent liberation. If there were a real snake there, then it's a very different story. It's the same when we consider our work in the relative area of existence.

Samsara is the delusion that we've experienced for so long. If samsara had authentic existence, an independent existence, and was not just in relation to ourselves, then it would be very difficult, maybe impossible to work with. One would have to physically change the whole world in order to remove suffering. But samsara is related to one's deluded approach that makes it is a very workable situation. The relative truth means working with the truth of what takes place on that relative level, the delusion, the products of delusion. Within the relative world it is most meaningful to work on the purification of karma, which is related to that process of delusion, by developing meditation, which has the power of

eliminating that delusion. But at the same time, if one thoroughly understands the absolute level and understands what has really always been the backdrop for this relative process, then one will see the equality of samsara and nirvana, in terms of the quality of their manifestation being products of the mind. So these two fit together. The whole point is not doubt or debate the validity of our relative work, because we understand this absolute relationship.

J. THE APPLICATION OF PURIFYING OF THE WORLDS

The tenth point in this over-all section deals with the purification of the worlds. Normally ordinary beings are much more subject to that which is negative and unwholesome than to the good qualities, so there is predominance of desire, aversion, jealousy, pride, stupidity, and so on. Usually there is only a few of the good qualities, such as love and compassion, aspiration, diligence and so on. When the inner mind is mainly poisoned, with a few good qualities, then this causes the outer world to be experienced as a very impure place. The way the outer world appears is intimately related to the way the inner mind is conditioned. So according to beings' conditioning and their karma, they perceive the world, the environment in a certain way. The bodhisattvas are different, because through their work of cultivating all the good qualities of the love, compassion, diligence, and so on, they are removing more and more all of the poisons. When their inner mind is pure, then the outer environment manifests as very pure. This is where we have the pure dimensions of experience, pure lands and so on. We appreciate how through their practice these bodhisattvas are helping to purify the world. Obviously it's not a question of environmental changing, but a question of training the mind of their own and other being's mind and then through their activity helping others to purify their mind. Depending upon the state of the mind of the beings, the worlds will appear in a different way. So generally speaking, the bodhisattvas are purifying the worlds.

K. THE APPLICATION OF SKILLFUL MEANS

Skillful means in this context is understanding the kinds of activity in which one needs to engage one's mind and practice. It deals with the work of understanding the nature of things. Skillful means involves conquering the various obstacles, blockages, and negative forces. Skillful means are developed in order to increase one's own positive qualities of practice. Skillful means are cultivated to help one quickly achieve the goal, skillful means are cultivated in order that we can really be of use to others and bring them to maturation.

Through the eleven points we have now come to the end of the fourth main section of the book, which is called the actual realization of all aspects.

Chapter 14

The Application when Reaching the Peak

TOPIC V. APPLICATION WHEN REACHING THE PEAK

The fifth main topic of the book is called the climax, peak or the summit (Tib. *sbyor*) which is part of the second group of topics called the four applications. As we apply ourselves to the path and practice we will traverse certain stages of improvement. Each of these stages has its highest point or peak. So what we see is that the path of junction comes to a peak. Likewise, each path has its peak or fruition. These are eight topics of these peaks at each of the stages.

A. SIGNS OF THE APPLICATION OF THE PEAK

The first subtopic is the signs of reaching the peak in the path of junction. First, we experience the things of life to be like a daydream. This way of relating to things is the sign that our actual meditation on emptiness in combination with an understanding of the twelve links of interdependence, has matured to a certain point. We really will understand all manifestation to be like a dream. Another sign of reaching the peak, particularly on the path of junction, is that we have a dislike for the self-centeredness of the hinayana, and no inclination for a state of peace and bliss for oneself, because we are interested in helping other people. Another sign of reaching the summit on the stage of the path of junction is that we will actually have visions of the Buddha seeing the Buddha face-to face. There are actually twelve particular signs of attaining the peak of the path of junction.

B. INCREASE OF MERIT

The sign of reaching the peak is that the positive qualities will emerge in a very strong way. This is particularly a result of a very powerful accumulation of virtue in our existence. One example of this is to imagine that everyone in the world were making offerings to Buddha. This will be a very vast offering, but this is the scope of virtue that we can think of when we think of a bodhisattva having a very great deal of virtue. To be able to generate such qualities is a sign of having reached the climax of the path of junction. But we have to be a little careful, because in the path of junction there are four stages: warming, the peak, forbearance, and highest worldly attainment. This is the sign of attaining the end of the path of junction, the stage of the highest worldly attainment.

C. STABILITY

The third topic deals with stability or firmness or solidity. The first three chapters of this work dealt with the wisdom of omniscience, the wisdom of the path, and the wisdom of the foundation. The bodhisattvas who are on this path of junction, gained to a large extent those three areas of wisdom. They understand the qualities of the result, of the path, and of the foundation. Because of that deeper and vast understanding of these, they will help other beings. They help other beings unflinchingly, because they realize the quality of the result, the path, and the basic qualities and teachings which are there. They never drop this helping of other beings, through that wisdom. They help beings in a way that is not mixed up with anything that is very bad. Because of that, their activity is very firm and stable, rooted in knowledge, and unflinching.[26]

D. PERFECT ABIDING OF MIND

The fourth topic is called perfect resting of mind or perfect mental abiding. This is particularly related to having a remarkable power of samadhi. On that stage the sort of virtue that one is generating is again compared to the amount of virtue that could be generated using an illustration of the cosmos.[27] First we imagine all the virtue

in the cosmos made up of the four continents and sub-continents. Next we imagine that all the virtue in the cosmos has been increased a thousand fold. Then we imagine all the virtue in this kilo-cosmos being expanded another thousand fold. Then we imagine the virtue of this mega-cosmos being expanded a thousand-fold to make a giga-cosmos. When we then think about such a vast image of cosmos and the amount of virtue that could be generated by all of the beings in them, it gives us some idea of the virtue which the bodhisattvas in that stage are generating. The reason that they are capable of producing such goodness is because of their power of samadhi. This samadhi is quite remarkable and quite stable. It is very firmly rooted in what is true. With that as a foundation in the activity of virtue, it can be as powerful ashas just been described. So in the list of topics, the topic is called proper mental abiding, and the key to that is the remarkable samadhi that they have.

E. THE APPLICATION OF PEAK OF THE PATH OF INSIGHT

Now we want to look at the peak qualities of the path of insight. We can look at this from several angles.

1. WHAT IS TO BE REMOVED

The first angle is to consider what we get rid of in that path of insight. It's particularly concerned with the cognitive obscurations. Actually through the path of insight and the path of cultivation, one is continually working on an ever more subtle removal of the *emotional obscurations* and the *cognitive obscurations*. On the path of cultivation we are concerned with the concomitant blockages meaning those which arise with one simultaneously. This simultaneously arising means that they are simultaneously there with us and not really dependent on an external influence or conditioning. When we look at the various blockages, we can see that first that we have the emotional obscurations such as our desires, aversions, pride, and doubts. We also have the cognitive obscurations, which is to think of things as real and truly existent. These concomitant blockages, don't come from the outside or from the environment. They are conditioning from beginningless time. For so long we have

become accustomed to these bad habits of thinking and feeling. When we are born and grew up, they are a part of our make-up, and they are the main thing the practice is focused on in the path of cultivation.

In contrast, the main thing which is given up on this path of insight are mental artifacts that are the products of our conditioning, particularly, those that have no root in actual reality. In other words, they are the ideas and feelings that we've created, because of the way we thought before, because of the way we've trained, and then labeled reality and defined it in a certain way, so that we created a certain artificiality. This artificiality covers many things. It covers mental artifacts that are naturally shed by gaining the insight of the path of insight. It covers the emotional defilements that we created by the way we thought previously, and built up our emotions, and the way we feel, and the way we define ourselves in the world. It covers the cognitive obscuration that are these artificial ideas and way of relating to things, to the truth, to the idea of the self and so on. A large body of very subtle thought processes are removed by the stage of insight. When we have a religion or a philosophy that is a fabricated thing, then we condition ourself to believe in certain ideas. These ideas become a part of our reality. It's the undoing of these artificial and incorrect ideas, in particular our doubts about things which are actually truths. It's those things that get shed at this path of insight.

One should also understand that on the path of insight, there is a mutual relationship between the faults that one casts aside and the realization which one gains. We have just been looking at is how the artificial constructs and how these concomitant conditionings, these conditionings which are born as part of us, are cast aside. On the positive, what we gain, which is the wisdom aspect, the jnana aspect, is realization. These two depend on each other. Through getting rid of those age-old blockages, the wisdom emerges. Through the emergence of wisdom we can actually get rid of the mental artifacts on the path of insight. The wisdom of the path of insight emerges through overcoming the concomitant blockages that the wisdom of the path of meditation arises ever more clearly. So they rely very much upon each other.

At the peak of the path of insight, one particularly becomes free from any wrong attitude or understanding concerning the four Noble Truths. At the stage of insight, we no longer have distorted views of the meaning of the four Noble Truths, we no longer have doubts or hesitations, we understand them clearly. From the point of view of the cognitive obscurations, we get rid of the three circles at the path of insight.

At the peak of the path of insight, we also eliminate the four topics already discussed (C4) of the concept of the precept, the concept of the perceiver, the belief in concrete reality, and the belief in the apparent reality. Before this stage of concept of the precept, we believed that the outer world was real and existed on it own accord. Then we entered the path of insight and gradually eliminated the false concept that we are separate from that external reality.[28] The next concept of perceiver is gradually eliminated by realizing that inner mind which perceives that world, the experiencer, is also not existent as a thing. At that point of insight, we actually break through, and the deep-rooted feeling of a perceiver is shattered.

The first concept of a precept has two divisions. One is called "the entering aspect" and the other "the reversing aspect." The entering aspect is that one can approach the outer world as being that which makes us enter into samsara. The reverse aspect is that the external world is associated with what gets out of samsara. So there are two ways of relating to the outer world in terms of samsara, one in terms of how it gets into it and one in terms of how it gets out of it. These two ideas are part of the path of insight associated with the concept of the precept (the outer world).

There are also two things first of all for the precept, which is the outer world. Then as far as the idea of a perceiver is concerned, then there are two areas of that which are removed. One is the belief in a concrete reality, so this is a different from just the idea of someone who perceives or a mind which perceives as a thing. Here we are talking about putting onto that idea of a mind with existence in any sense, with any solidity, any independent reality, any substantiality, that is removed. Then even more subtly than that, in one way, one removes the belief in apparent reality, where even the idea of mind or perceiver, just as an idea is also cast away. For instance when one is watching the cinema or television, one may see an elephant. One

can first of all overcome the idea that the elephant is real, but even more subtle is just the mental image and concept of elephant anyway, even just a television elephant, just an apparent elephant. So It's those two areas that deal with a perceiver, the solidification of a perceiver, and even the belief in the apparent reality only of a perceiver. All of these things are gone beyond at the path of insight.

2. THE ACTUAL APPLICATION OF THE PEAK

In the last chapter we looked at the various stages reached on the path of junction. In this chapter we looked at mainly the things that one has to eliminate on the path of insight. There are two aspects of the path of insight: what to eliminate and what to realize. Now we will begin to look at what actually takes place on the path of insight in terms of achievement and realization.

The first quality of the peak of the path of insight is the way in which the six paramitas are completely interactive and mutually supporting. This is a topic that we have already touched on and it deals with the way that when one practices, for instance generosity, then when one is skilled, automatically that generosity is supported by correct moral conduct, it has the power of forbearance, the power of diligence, meditation, and wisdom. Even more than that, it's that the generosity doesn't just exist by itself because each paramita in themselves has the qualities of the other paramitas. In each of the six paramitas, the power of the other six is also present so there are thirty-six ways of interacting (six times six). In fact what happens in this path of insight, is that in the skillful action of the bodhisattva, there is simultaneously the presence of these thirty-six categories of the paramitas.

There are two different ways that hinayana and mahayana practitioners go through the five paths. In the path of insight of the hinayana, what happens quite quickly. As soon as the insight has emerged, the hinayana practitioner moves immediately onto to the path of cultivation the path of insight consists of the meditation phase only, there is no post-meditation. When the bodhisattvas develop insight on the path of insight, it's longer lasting. Rather than moving instantly into the path of cultivation, the bodhisattvas engage in two types of absorption: absorption and postmeditation of that

absorption. The actual absorption is called the lion-like majesty absorption because when one has insight into the true nature, one then feels a tremendous confidence. This confidence is compared to that of a lion, who is not scared of any other being, and therefore is sure of itself and its ability and majesty of its situation. Because the bodhisattva gains that very definite, unmistakable insight into the truth, then he or she is no longer shaken by the power of doubt, worry about samsara, or about ignorance concerning the true nature. It is a very powerful confidence that automatically comes with the realization. That is the chief characteristic of the samadhi. The after-effect of that samadhi deals with relative truth. One realizes the way in which origination takes place, in particular the *twelve links of interdependence*. One understands very clearly the twelve-fold process of the karmic formations that make the different levels of consciousness. One realizes the way that situation evolves, and how to reverse that situation. By taking away any one of these twelve links automatically stops the arising of the succeeding link. If one can uproot ignorance at the beginning, then there can be no more karmic formations and none of the rest of the links. So one sees the process of samsaric development and sees the process of nirvana, which is made by reversing the samsaric process or taking it apart step-by-step in reverse order. Beside understanding that as an automatic after-effect of this samadhi, one also can appreciate the nature of the samsara which is produced and the nirvana which is the release from that samsara. One is a one-way process, the other is the reverse order process. That becomes very clear how those two sides of the coin, as it were, are not things really existent in themselves, but how they are mutually dependent, how really the reversing of the delusion, which we call nirvana, and the release, depends on the fact that there was a delusion in the first place. One sees the relative interdependence of samsara and nirvana.

F. THE PEAK OF THE PATH OF CULTIVATION

Now we move on to look at the path of cultivation, still in this main topic of the summit, this character that is dealing with the signs of achievement of the path of cultivation. Generally speaking, what we are doing throughout the path of cultivation is to work on what we

have gained on the path of insight. We are cultivating it and bringing it to its fullest possibility. That takes place mainly through development in meditation, particularly one focuses on the progression through the various stages of meditation (Skt. *dhyana*): the form dhyana, the formless meditations, and then the meditation without any meditation (non-meditation). One needs first to perfect the first dhyana, then move on to the second dhyana, which one perfects and goes on to the third dhyana and fourth dhyana. The first four dhyanas are degrees of absorption with form. Then after the fourth dhyana, one moves on to the first formless absorption. When that's perfected, to the second formless absorption, the third and the fourth. Finally, one moves on to what is called the "no-mind meditation." Having practiced by going to the end of the first and then to the beginning of the second one can then gain the flexibility of mind to be able to leap through the first one or two, then to zoom through the first four, five, six, and first, all the way up to number eight. Besides gaining the power of being absorbed into one after the other, a very great workability with one's meditation, so one can very rapidly move through all of those states with ease.

G. THE PEAK OF THE ABSENCE OF OBSTACLES

The next topic mentions the absence of obstacles and this concerns also what is called *vajra-like samadhi*. The vajra-like samadhi is very special and very powerful. It is given this epithet because it really clears away any remaining obstacle to enlightenment. This samadhi is so powerful that there is nothing which can break it or disturb it. Neither the obvious or the very subtle emotional or cognitive obscurations are able to shake the vajra-like samadhi. By resting in the vajra-like samadhi, one smashes the power of those obstacles and one breaks through even those very, very hard to remove, long-lasting, extremely subtle mental habits that one has. By resting in vajra-like samadhi, these are automatically dissipated. This samadhi or deep meditation is compared to a vajra because a vajra is said to be unbreakable and able to pierce any other substance. It is vajra-like samadhi which enables the final realization to come, simply because it will remove any remaining obstacles.

H. MISTAKEN CONCEPTS WHICH ARE REMOVED

From the summit of the path of junction all the way through to the vajra-like samadhi, which is the threshold of actual liberation, we have extreme confidence because we see the true nature of phenomena. Because of that confidence, we are completely unshakable by anything which is contrary to the truth. Because we have constant perception of this truth, we have great confidence in it making it unshakable in the face of any obstacle, in those terms, any obstacle or others' doubts. This unshakable confidence creates peace rooted in the true view. Because of that, one has the natural pacification of anything which is apparent, anything which is heretical through which other beings or different situations might try to throw one from one's path.

Questions

Question: What is the difference between a shravaka and a pratyekabuddha?
Rinpoche: The word shravaka means "a hearer." That gives us a good idea of what they are. They are those who listen to the teachings of a spiritual friend and who realize the value of those teachings and work very hard to understand them, develop them, and put them into practice. The shravakas are dependent on living at a time when the Buddha teaches or his teaching is given. The pratyekabuddha or solitary buddha is one who awakens or who develops all by himself. It doesn't mean a class of buddha, as such. Through the power of former karma and former study and understanding, they take birth usually in worlds where there is no spread of the Buddha's teaching at that time. All by themselves, through the power of their karma and former understanding, they start to understand the nature of the four Noble Truths, they understand the world is suffering, they understand the causes of those sufferings by their own observation, they understand the twelve links of interdependence and how to meditate, all through the power of their former conditioning. Because of that they go to places of solitude and they progress even further. So that is the main difference really.

Question: What is the difference between these terms "nonconceptual samadhi" and "meditation on emptiness," and "resting or meditating beyond triplicity?"

Rinpoche: There are some differences between these three. When we talk of *nonconceptual samadhi*, we're mainly referring to shamatha meditation when the mind rests in a state of great peace and equality. In that state thoughts don't arise very much so the mind is at peace without thoughts. We're really not concerned whether there is an awareness of the true nature or not, whether one has actually understood emptiness or not. We're just talking about peace or freedom from the troubling power of concept.

When we use the term "meditation on emptiness," we are talking about the realization of the true nature of phenomena. That means through analysis and direct penetration, one gets to the true nature of things, perceiving how things really are rather than how things seem to be. When we talk about "meditating on emptiness," we really mean to meditate on the emptiness or absence of the formerly projected characteristics.

When we talk about "meditating beyond triplicity," or the three circles of acting beyond the doer, the doing, and something done (object, subject and action). This term refers mainly to the post-meditation wherein one cultivates the paramitas. So in postmeditation, when one practices generosity, one does it without this idea of a giver, somebody receiving, and what is given. When one practices skillful conduct, one does it without the solidification of somebody keeping a conduct, a conduct to be kept, and the act of keeping it, and so on. In fact, when we talk about "meditating on emptiness," that is more concerned with the actual meditation phase itself, the penetration into the true nature and the resting beyond triplicity with the postmeditation.

Question: Is there a correspondence between the four stages mentioned in the mahamudra system, stages of one-pointedness, freedom from concept, one-taste, and no meditation, and this classical system of the five paths that we find in the mahayana?

Rinpoche: There is indeed a correspondence. When we analyze the four stages of mahamudra, we find three sub-stages in each one, so that in the first one, which is one-pointedness, there is the lesser, the middling, and the greater stage. In the next one is freedom from

concept, then there is a lesser, middling, and greater stage and so on. We have these twelve aspects, sometimes called the twelve yogas of mahamudra. The first stage of one-pointedness refers mainly to one-pointed tranquillity meditation. The lesser and middling stages of one-pointedness would be more or less associated with the path of accumulation. The greater stage of one-pointedness would be more associated with the path of junction, because one is joined to the true meaning. The second mahamudra stage of freedom of insight is associated with the path of insight. This stage of beyond concept meaning that first of all one has developed the power of shamatha, and then through that tranquillity meditation one develops vipashyana. Because of that insight of vipashyana, one realizes the true nature, which corresponds to the path of insight.

The third mahamudra stage of one-taste corresponds to the path of cultivation and the four mahamudra stages of non-meditation corresponds to the firth path of no-more study. The one-taste stage corresponds to the second to the seventh bodhisattva levels. The eighth bodhisattva level corresponds to the lesser aspect of the non-meditation. The ninth and the tenth bodhisattva levels correspond to the middling aspect of the beyond meditation level. Then the state of Buddhahood would be the highest of the twelve sub-sections, the highest point of the no-meditation level.

When one reaches the twelfth stage, the highest stage of no-meditation through mahamudra practice, then the qualities of mind that one achieves are the same of those of Buddhahood, achieved through the classic, long mahayana path. But the speech and the physical qualities are not quite the same. This is because when one traverses the ordinary mahayana path, then for many endless kalpas, one is taking birth again and again and generating virtue. This is an extremely powerful thing, even though it is a much longer process. In that long process one accumulates such vast virtue that this will lead at the end of the ordinary mahayana to the tremendous physical and speech qualities that we associate with the thirty-two and eighty marks of the Buddha. When one goes through the very profound and rapid path of mahayana, one won't necessarily get those. If one looks at the life of Jetsun Milarepa or the life of Gampopa, they didn't manifest the thirty-two signs and the eighty marks like the Shakyamuni Buddha did. This is because they, for instance Milarepa

was born into an ordinary body and he so quickly perfected the mahamudra, so that the mind quality of realization is exactly the same, but the body and speech qualities that manifest for others are not the same.

Chapter 15

Gradual Application of the Stages of the Bodhisattva Path

TOPIC VI. GRADUAL APPLICATION OF THE STAGES OF THE BODHISATTVA PATH

In our study of the Prajnaparamita, we move on to sixth main topic of the book. As you remember the fourth through eighth main topics of the book are four topics on application. This sixth topic concerns the gradual application to the bodhisattva practice and contains thirteen stages.

We saw in the preceding two topics concerned the application to actual realization and the summit of each of the paths concerned the way a Bodhisattva actually goes through the development and his or her practice. This sixth topic will show us how they gradually apply themselves. Basically we are thinking of two sorts of practitioners. There are the practitioners who have dull faculties and they need to work their way step-by-step through these thirteen stages. Then there are those who have the sharp faculties called one-instant learners who will be discussed in the next chapter. We will see how those steps through which they develop can be applied to one instant.

A-F. THE SIX PARAMITAS

The first six stages in the chapter deal with the six paramitas of generosity, skillful conduct, forbearance, diligence, meditation, and prajna. They constitute the first six subtopics. They have already been extensively discussed.

G. THE RECOLLECTIONS OF THE BUDDHA

Next are the recollections or mindfulness (Tib. *trenpa*)[29] especially of the three jewels. The first recollection is the recollection of the Buddha. We should always call the most perfect being, who is the Buddha, to mind, so that when we are practicing, then we think that whatever we do, then the Buddha who is omniscient, is fully aware of what we are doing. So we should therefore always practice what is very good, and feeling that the Buddha is fully aware of that. Our practice of the paramitas becomes an offering that we make to the omniscient and perfect Buddha. If we make mistakes and become lazy or heedless, we also needs to be mindful of the Buddha and his omniscience and to feel a sense of regret. Then we should apply our effort to remove such action from our being. So this point really means to keep the omniscience of the Buddha, always in our heart and life.

H. THE RECOLLECTION OF THE DHARMA

The next recollection is the recollection of the dharma The recollection of the dharma means to always have in one's mind an awareness of the value of the dharma. To think that those teachings given by the Buddha are the teachings which enable us to reach the state of complete liberation and omniscience and to know that these teachings will enable us to get out of the suffering of samsara. The dharma will give us the real means to help all other beings. So we keep that always in mind, and the dharma also points out to us those things that are good for us to do and those things that are useless and harmful. So having a constant recollection of dharma will let us know that I should develop this thing, let us get rid of something of no use.

I. THE RECOLLECTION OF THE SANGHA

The third recollection is the recollection of the sangha. This means being aware of the great value of the arya sangha in one's own existence. This arya or noble sangha are our friends and our guides who will help us to enter into the perfect paths and to progress from

the stage of accumulation to the stages of junction, insight, cultivation, and eventually to the complete liberation of our whole being. They can do this because the arya sangha has wisdom and the many qualities of abandoning and realization. These recollections of the three jewels were from the point of view of result. Then there are three recollections from the point of view of cause.

J. THE RECOLLECTION OF RIGHT CONDUCT

The next recollection is the recollection of right conduct. It is by constantly bearing in mind the need and value of right conduct that principally one will get rid of the things which need to be removed from our confused existence. By being aware of the *ten virtues* and ten non-virtues that must be given up that one will act in a proper way, physically and verbally. One also knows that one will not create more bad karma, and thereby one will reach the very highest results. It's something which is quite vital to our practice, and one should keep this awareness of the meaning of right conduct present, very alive all the time.

L. THE RECOLLECTION OF GIVING

The next recollection is the recollection of giving. This means to keep in mind, all the time, the welfare of others. There are different types of giving to help others: one can give material things dharma teachings, or give protection to those in fear. Wishing beings to be free from suffering, one keeps in mind to always strive for the benefit of others in this way.

M. THE RECOLLECTION OF THE DIVINE STATE

The sixth recollection is called the recollection of the divinity. Of course, the ultimate fruition that we will get from our practice is to achieve Buddhahood and to attain the three jewels. Those were the subject of the first three recollections. But from now until our final attainment of liberation, because we are acting in a good way and we are always trying to be better and more subtle, then there will be very good results which will come from it, and life after life, we will

gain very good rebirths, either in a human form or a divine form, and that is a very useful and a beneficial thing, so this recollection of divinity is to be aware of the good temporary state, which exists as a product of our practice between now and our final liberation.

N. THE TRUE NATURE OF PHENOMENA

We have had the stages of the six paramitas and the six recollections, now the last stage concerns realization of the true nature. With that and the other twelve, then we see the twelve main things to contemplate in this chapter which deals with the gradual application.

Chapter 16

The Instantaneous Practitioners

TOPIC VII. INSTANTANEOUS APPLICATION

The seventh main topic of the *Abhisamlankara* concerns the fourth application called the instantaneous application. In the previous chapter we saw that those individuals with less abilities can gradually progress through generosity, skillful conduct, forbearance and so on to reach realization. However, if we can practice in a completely untainted way, practicing what are called the untainted six paramitas, then within one instant, we can realize it all. Once they've been mastered gradually by somebody who is very supreme, then in one instant they are all present.

One example of the instantaneous realization is that of a water wheel. You can have a very big wheel with lots of buckets around it. By the simple movement of the one wheel, all of the other parts of the wheel are set in motion and perform the activity of lifting water. This is to show that because of pushing that one part, everything else also moves automatically and fulfills its function, so that by functioning on one particular area of goodness, all of the other paramitas and other good qualities will manifest, and will be developing and progressing.

We can understand what takes place in terms of the two accumulations. When one reaches the state of such clarity of action, then when one just does one virtuous action, one does something that will gather the accumulation of virtue, then through the power of that, there are so many other virtues which automatically come along. In particular when one develops understanding, then through progress in one area of understanding, there will be so many other wisdoms which will emerge at the same time. When we open up our awareness and integrate the Prajnaparamita into our mind, then we are touching the central nerve of our existence because the Prajnaparamita works on the very root of all the problems. The root

of the problem is ignorance, and ignorance causes the defilements, as well as the various cognitive obscurations in terms of postulation of an object, the feeling of a subject, the solidification of reality and the belief in apparent reality. By working on the Prajnaparamita, dig out the root of all of those problems. By digging out the root of those problems, then automatically the many qualities of wisdom will emerge. So by working on the Prajnaparamita to eliminate these five obstacles, we will automatically manifest the *five wisdoms* because these wisdom are already within us. With sharp faculties we can work on our ignorance and the many wisdoms will emerge automatically. If we apply ourselves to virtue then just by doing this one thing, a tremendous outflow of virtue will happen. This all takes place simultaneously. It all very naturally will be present in one action.

A. THE ACCUMULATION OF MERIT

The first key point is concentrated on the instantaneous production of virtue, that is, how one virtue produces many virtues simultaneously. The second point is how in the accumulation of wisdom, the development of wisdom can bring about an opening of many other kinds of wisdoms. In the third point is the simultaneous and instantaneous production of virtue and wisdom. We understand how one action can foster a very vast way both of the accumulations. For instance, if we are practicing generosity very well, it contains all of the other five paramitas. So generosity when it is practiced correctly, is enhanced by proper conduct and forbearance and so on.

B. THE ACCUMULATION OF WISDOM

At the same time as practicing the simultaneity of the six paramitas or even the thirty-six subdivisions, we also do that in the light of wisdom, which means that we know what is taking place is beyond triplicity. We know that our practice of those paramitas takes place like a dream. What is happening is not something which has true existence ultimately.

C. THE SIMULTANEITY OF THE TWO ACCUMULATIONS

Because of that, in one action, say generosity, be perfected in the six paramitas and at the same time, the six paramitas being mainly associated with the development of virtue, and at the same time, in that same instant, one is improving one's wisdom, accumulation of wisdom through that sort of understanding. It's that simultaneity that the two accumulations which is the third key topic.

D. THE SIMULTANEITY OF HOW THINGS ARE AND HOW THEY APPEAR

Through wisdom one understands how the practice or the way things manifest is like a dream. But actually taking this example, there is a definite stage of dreaming and a definite state of being awake, and there is some difference between the two. What the bodhisattvas realize is that the way things appear and the way things really are not two separate things, so that they experience in a single instant without any differentiation the way things are the manifestations of the relative world, like a dream, and the way things really are, which is the true nature. But the bodhisattvas make no distinction between those two. They see the complete oneness of those two, but at the same time they are not confused. They know that the relative world manifests as the relative world and the absolute manifests as the absolute. It's a very subtle point to know these two for what they are and to know them as completely inseparable.

That takes us to the end of the seventh chapter. We've looked at the application which takes place gradually towards the goal and the instantaneous application.

Chapter 18

The Dharmakaya

TOPIC VIII. THE DHARMAKAYA

The final effect of practicing the correct paths and the Prajnaparamita is to attain the dharmakaya. Within the dharmakaya, we actually look at the four kayas: the svabhavikakaya, the jnana-dharmakaya, the sambhogakaya, and the nirmanakaya. It's those four aspects of the main result that we study, along with the five profound wisdoms or five jnanas of the buddhas, which are also the result, which form part of those, which are inherent to those kayas. The five wisdoms are the dharmadhatu wisdom, the mirror-like wisdom, the wisdom of sameness, the discriminative wisdom, and the wisdom of accomplishment.

The first three wisdoms--the dharmadhatu, the mirror-like, and the wisdom of sameness form the wisdom of how-it-is. The fourth discriminative wisdom and the fifth wisdom of accomplishment are mainly concerned with the wisdom of variety. The wisdom of seeing just as it is the very nature of everything and the wisdom of seeing things the way they manifest. Through the kayas and the wisdoms, then there is full value for oneself and full value for others. This means that there is nothing that one can achieve that would be better for oneself, there is nothing that one could achieve that would help others more. The svabhavikakaya and the jnana-dharmakaya are related to one's own benefit, and the sambhogakaya and the nirmanakaya are related to the benefit for others.

The Kayas

This word *kaya* literally means "bodies," but it really means more dimensions of Buddhahood. The first kaya the essence kaya or

svabhavikakaya. "Svabhavikakaya" means "very essence." that is pointing us to Buddhahood. The svabhavikakaya brings us to liberation, which is the integration with the very essence of everything, the true nature of everything in the universe. That integration is not like some big voidness devoid of any knowing quality. It's endowed with incredible clarity and wisdom and as we've seen it has the five wisdoms. It is something very alive. That is what we are talking about, in terms of the Buddha himself, when we use the term jnana-dharmakaya. Of course, "dharma" in English is close to the word meaning the very pith or core essence of everything, which is this wisdom.

When we say essence kaya, we're talking about resting in the very essence. When we're talking about dharmakaya, we're looking at the nature of that essence in terms of its wisdom, These two kayas constitute the highest thing that one could ever achieve for oneself. Other beings who have not reached that state can't appreciate that It's beyond the scope of their own awareness. They need something in terms of form with which to relate, in order to appreciate the meaning of Buddhahood. So we have the other two kayas, which are the way that the actual state of Buddhahood manifests to minds which have not reached that degree of purity. So then we have the sambhogakaya, which means the aspect of perfect enjoyment. That enjoyment doesn't mean the enjoyment in the everyday sense. It means enjoyment in the etymological sense of having the use of or access to something, one could say the aspect of perfect expression of Buddhahood. That is what is experienced by the very pure beings, the great bodhisattvas. Then there is the nirmanakaya, the emanation aspect, and this is what is experience by less pure beings. So those last two constitute the very best thing to help others.

A. THE ESSENCE KAYA

The essence kaya, the svabhavikakaya is the aspect which is the very essence of everything, very nature of everything. This nature is is completely indivisible, which has always been there, it is something which in itself immutable and ever-present everywhere. But when we talk about the essence kaya as part of Buddhahood, then what we are understanding is that when one reaches Buddhahood, one returns

to an integration with that state, because one has become unaware of it through the production of ignorance and delusion, and because one returns to it, then it is mentioned as an aspect of Buddhahood, even though it has always been there. What happens is that one first of all ignores that essence which has always been there, and one generates the whole of delusion and its products and the mesh of samsara and so on. Eventually through the practice, one will remove all of the delusion and ignorance. then one sees the essence just as it is, just as It's always been. This is what we are talking about when we say the essence aspect or the essence kaya of the Buddha.

We can again return to the example of the rope and the snake. In fact, in the example of the rope always was just a rope, but because there was this delusion, and that delusion causes the panic, fear and suffering, then one works through the delusion, and one comes to an understanding that it is just a rope. Then it is worthy of mention that one has returned to the understanding of what was always there in the first place.

B. THE JNANA-DHARMAKAYA

The wisdom aspect of the dharmakaya is the jnana-dharmakaya (or wisdom dharmakaya) in the text. The dharmakaya can be explained in many different ways. Some explanations are very lengthy, and some are more concise. In the *Uttara Tantra* there is a fairly detailed explanation of the dharmakaya, which points to just some of the qualities, for instance, the ten powers, the four fearlessnesses, the eighteen distinctive qualities making thirty-two qualities. In the Prajnaparamita, there is an even more extensive explanation of dharmakaya with twenty-one qualities. The ten powers of the Buddha for instance would form one point. The four fearlessnesses would make one point. The eighteen distinctive qualities another point and there are another eighteen different points to help us understand the dharmakaya and its qualities.

In the twenty-one of the wisdom-dharmakaya we see the qualities of the Buddha and we see the wisdom. These twenty-one areas of knowledge can be summed up in two main areas: the wisdom inherent to Buddhahood itself and the most loving compassion which is inherent to Buddhahood. Through the wisdom

of Buddhahood and the tremendous development of the love which has taken place before on the path, there are so many skilful ways of helping beings. This gives us two main areas through which we analyze what takes place in the dharmakaya at Buddhahood.

The activity of the buddhas is completely spontaneous and completely without effort. For example to propagate the philosophy of Communism took the training of millions of soldiers and hundreds of millions of dollars was spent on arms and weapons in order to spread the idea of Communism. Soldiers were engaged in battle with a bloody conflict for years and years, all with the idea of implanting that ideal in the minds of other people. For all of those millions of dollars, training of so many people, and so much effort, they were unable to conquer the whole world.

However, the Buddha never even spent one dollar on arms in order to spread his philosophy. He carried just a begging bowl and taught the truth. It was a very spontaneous and natural spread, because of the very nature of the Buddha and his teachings. Those ideas spread through millions of people for over 2,500 years, and the Buddha's teachings went from India to Tibet, China, Japan, Ceylon, Burma, and Thailand. These days the teachings are touching many people in the Western world. It gives us some idea of this effortless and spontaneity that takes place through the very nature of the way the Buddha and his teachings are.

Of course, from time to time the dharma in a certain country does decline. For example the spread of Islam caused Buddhism in India to almost completely disappear. But if one looks very carefully, one can see that whenever there is readiness and acceptance of the dharma, one sees very natural spread of the dharma to that place and its growth. It is something very spontaneous. You may doubt this, but if you think about it you may see that's just how it happens. The Buddha activity is very spontaneous and natural. As soon as there's a benefit that can spring from it and a receptivity, then automatically it will flourish and manifest.

The Buddha activity is continuously available, but it doesn't mean that all of the time everyone is benefiting from it. Receiving benefit from the Buddha activity depends upon one's openness, one's karmic situation. The Buddha's activity is like the rain which

falls from a vast cloud, then those raindrops is available. If there is a seed of a plant in the ground, then once the rain falls, that seed can grow and develop to come to its fruition. But if the seed is on a rock with no soil, it will never grow. The rain may fall for hundreds of years, but still nothing will come of it. So one should know that the Buddha's activity is not intermittent, but that what makes it more or less effective is one's readiness to receive it.

The Form Kayas

The four kayas are the svabhavikakaya, the jnana-dharmakaya, the sambhogakaya, and the nirmanakaya. The first svabhavikakaya, is the aspect of the very essence of the dharmakaya and the second, is the wisdom dharmakaya. Now we will look at the other two kayas or aspects of Buddhahood. These two fall into the group we call the form kayas, because they manifest themselves in form. So we have the dharmakaya and the form kayas.

The form kayas are the sambhogakaya and the nirmanakaya. They are called the form kayas because they take a certain manifestation, they appear in a certain way in order to help other beings. They can be seen, be heard, be understood, they are something which can communicate the qualities of Buddhahood. The buddhas manifest in the form realms to communicate the dharma to other beings of all levels of understanding. That property of being able to manifest, this Buddha activity, is part of Buddhahood. One of the qualities of Buddhahood is to be able to manifest all of the form qualities of the Buddha. Also Buddhahood can manifest activity, so that from Buddhahood there is the manifestation in the relative levels of the mind of beings to act in a way which will inspire them to reach the highest realization.

The formal manifestation of the Buddha that takes place is determined by the nature of the people who experience the Buddha. First when the bodhisattvas have reached the levels of very profound realization, those we call the mahabodhisattvas who have purified the gross levels of karma, and because of that, their perception is very pure and open. They perceive the Buddha in a very pure way in the sambhogakaya or the aspect of very perfect expression. Second, even impure beings, those we call ordinary beings who have not yet

reached the path of insight, can experience the Buddha if their karma is good enough. They see the Buddha in a form that appears in their reality. That is emanated from the sambhogakaya so we call it the emanation aspect or *nirmanakaya* in Sanskrit. Even fairly impure beings can meet the Buddha if their fortune is good enough, and they can receive the teachings of dharma from that aspect. So we have two main areas of form manifestations, the sambhogakaya for highly realized bodhisattvas, and the nirmanakaya, in particular the *supreme nirmanakaya*, for so-called ordinary beings.

C. SAMBHOGAKAYA

The sambhogakaya form, which manifests for the bodhisattvas, is the result of all of the Buddha's former work while he was on the path to Buddhahood. In that long evolution before reaching Buddhahood, then for so many ages, the being who was to become a Buddha, developed a very pure and noble motivation. He performed so much virtue and so much profound and vast activity in previous lives that he can manifest the magnificent form of the sambhogakaya. The sambhogakaya has thirty-two very special characteristics called the *thirty-two major marks*, such as the mound on the head, the dharmachakras on the soles of the feet, and so on. All of those are the symbols of the perfection of qualities that the Buddha reached on the path. The final physical manifestation of the Buddha, that will be the very special symbols of what happened before. Beside the thirty-two major marks, there are *eighty minor marks*. These are more detailed, special characteristics only found on the Buddha, which are the result of his former practice and former goodness. The sambhogakaya form is the most excellent, but one should also know that what we call the supreme nirmanakaya, also manifest these thirty-two and eighty marks. One should also realize that because of what takes place on that level, the experience of the sambhogakaya is the most excellent, and that's the normally associated with the thirty-two and eighty marks.

The sambhogakaya in Tibetan is *longchözokpeku*.[30] By analyzing the meaning of the words, then one can understand more about the sambhogakaya itself. The first syllable is *longchö*, means the "wealth" or wealth of experience, the *zok* means "perfection,"

and the *ku* means the kaya or "body' or "embodiment." So one can say the aspect the perfection of the wealth of experience. It's rather long-winded, but the meaning of that is that the wish of beings, who aspire to Buddhahood, is to be able to in the end, help everyone else to achieve the liberation of perfection of Buddhahood themselves. When one reaches Buddhahood, then one has the fullest ability to help others and guide them on the path and so on. So it means that one's wealth, in those terms, is the great wealth of being able to give the teachings and to give help to other beings. It is the various students and disciples who form the object of this gift of wealth that one gives, the wealth of experience. That wealth of experience is utterly complete and perfect. It is not a relative or limited ability to help, but all of the qualities are there most perfectly. One who achieves Buddhahood will at all times and in every circumstance be able to help beings in whichever way is necessary according to their own openness. This is why we say not just the wealth of experience but the utterly perfect wealth of experience, and it's that aspect of the Buddha. We use this term for the sambhogakaya because it's on that level that the wealth of Buddhahood can be manifested to the very pure beings who experience it. That is the meaning of the sambhogakaya or longchözokpeku What happens is that in particular through this great wealth and perfection of experience, then the Buddha can turn the wheel of dharma for beings and in that way give them the teachings most perfectly.

We look at the utter perfection of wealth that these sambhogakaya buddhas have in terms of what we call the five certainties. The first of these is called definite place meaning that on the sambhogakaya level they only manifest the various purelands of the Buddhas. It's not a level of impure or relative manifestation, but the purelands. The second certainty is the definite form that they take. These are thirty-two marks and the eighty minor marks; these completely exceptional qualities that only the Buddha possesses in his form. That's how they appear to the beings on that level. The third certainty is the dharma that they teach. To those bodhisattvas, the sambhogakaya form of Buddha only teaches the mahayana dharma. That is taught most complete and there's no teaching of the hinayana and there is no *provisional truth* employed. So only the definitive truth of the mahayana is taught. The fourth certainty

concerns the entourage of the Buddha. On the sambhogakaya level his audience is only bodhisattvas in the ten deep bodhisattva levels. The Buddha teaches these bodhisattvas in order that they progress from the first to the second to the third level and so on. The fifth certainty is the Buddha on that level is constantly teaching. It's not like where we can listen to teachings in the daytime but we sleep at night. On that level there is the continuous teaching of the wheel of dharma. These five certainties show the utter perfection of wealth, this splendid way of manifesting that there is on the sambhogakaya through the state, through the form it takes, through the dharma taught, through those who listen, and through the time in which it takes place. In the text, the sambhogakaya is treated mainly by focusing on these thirty-two and eighty signs.

D. NIRMANAKAYA

The fourth kaya is the nirmanakaya. The nirmanakaya manifests to beings on the impure level, wherever they may be. All of the time the Buddha is manifesting in the nirmanakaya. With each of the kayas there is a different sort of constancy. The dharmakaya is the aspect of resting in the very essence of things, which is the Buddha's own experience. This is completely changeless, so we say the dharmakaya is changeless. The sambhogakaya, isn't changeless because it manifests different forms to the different beings, according to what is appropriate. What we can say is that it is constantly manifesting those forms, as we have seen through the five certainties. There is always the turning of the wheel of dharma taking place, so we say then that the sambhogakaya has permanent continuity. The nirmanakaya doesn't have this permanent continuity because sometimes the nirmanakaya appears in one world, and then that teaching after awhile declines, and then it will appear again in another world. But one should know that all of the time, in one place or another, the nirmanakaya is manifesting. Then we say there is an unbroken activity, so we talk about the constancy of the three kayas. The sambhogakaya has permanent continuity. The nirmanakaya has unbroken continuity.

The nirmanakaya form will manifest in whichever way it is necessary to help beings gain understanding and progress. In that

sense it is not like the sambhogakaya, which always manifests the teaching the mahayana in a very certain way, because beings on that impure level have such differences of understanding, and aspiration. To those who are ready for the mahayana teachings and who can most benefit, then there will be the teaching of the mahayana. To those who are psychologically not prepared to accept the mahayana, then there is the teaching of the hinayana. For those who can understand there is the teaching of what we call the definitive truth, and for those who could never grasp that definitive truth, there is the teaching of the provisional truth which will eventually bring them a state of greater certainty. So if somebody aspires to the lesser vehicle teachings, then the Buddha will take on form that would teach the hinayana. There are some individuals who can only conceive of themselves and external reality as being a solid reality and for these individuals the Buddha will teach the hinayana teachings. For those who can understand the absence of ego, the Buddha can teach them egolessness. For those who cannot comprehend the meaning of emptiness straight-away, the Buddha teaches in terms of the way things are on the relative level that person experiences. When they are ready for emptiness understanding, then he shows how those things are not truly existent. So in many different ways, the nirmanakaya teaches the various vehicles, the various truths, and so on. There are in fact many different forms of nirmanakaya. The chief one that we focus on is called the *supreme nirmanakaya*.

The way the nirmanakaya chiefly helps beings is by teaching the dharma, and by presenting the skilful means for attaining enlightenment. We can see this in the way in which the Buddha of the past, the present, and the future have manifested. The former Buddha, Kashyapa, came to our world, the Brahmin caste in India was viewed with the very greatest respect. So he took birth as a Brahmin and so people had the respect that would give great power to his teaching when he turned the wheel of dharma. In the time of Shakyamuni Buddha the royal caste had the most sway, and so Shakyamuni was born as a prince in a royal family. That way people had a very great respect for his teaching. It's a very skillful way of being born. In the time of the future Buddha, Maitreya, it will be a time of more democracy, so Maitreya, will be born in a way more

suitable to democratic civilization. The reason the buddhas take these births is because they see which sort of existence will be able to convey to other beings the teachings in the very best way.

Questions

Question: We always have this example of a rope one mistakes for a snake. But what happens if the opposite is true, i.e. that we mistake a real snake for a rope?
Rinpoche: Of course it's a very different situation if there's really a snake there. When we use the example, we're using the example of the situation where there is a rope there and what happens when one mistakes a rope for a snake. The reason that example is used is to show us the nature of delusion. Once we understand that sort of setup where there is something really taking place that we're not aware of and there is a delusion, which is causing a lot of trouble, then that makes it a very workable proposition to get rid of the delusion and go back to what's really there. As we've seen many times in the examples, we don't realize the true nature of everything and we make the delusion of samsara. The buddhas and the teachings show us that this is what has happened and how to get out of the delusion and reach Buddhahood. It's the fact that it is a delusion which makes the whole process of achieving Buddhahood possible. If it wasn't just a question of removing a delusion but of changing the way things are, it would be impossible to achieve Buddhahood. It's only the fact that we have an inaccurate perception that we can work on the situation. So if a snake were really there, then it would be a very different setup. There would be a very solid, truly existent external world in samsara, and in order to get free of it, it would be an almost impossible task. What we have is the guidance and the indications given by the teachings to show us that it is a situation that we are subject to a delusion. We already have the initial advice in pointing out that it is a rope there. We've mistaken a snake and once we know that's so, we can work on it. We don't need to sort of test it in that way.
Question: Is Buddha more like a god, something outside or does he have to do with our own inner being or mind?

Rinpoche: The best way to understand the Buddha is in terms of the teacher. When we talk about the Buddha, we are talking about the personage who in the past achieved realization and then taught the dharma. We follow what he says, so he is very much like a teacher for us. But, of course, through mastering those teachings ourselves, in the future we will become Buddha. That is something that is very much a part of us, so it's like anytime we go to a teacher. First of all we relate to that teacher as a teacher, but when we've learned everything, we ourselves become a teacher, so what was outside us has become inside and part of us in the end process. In that way when we think of Buddha or Buddhahood, then we can get the best appreciation. First we look to Buddha as a teacher, and eventually we ourselves will become Buddha.

Question: What is the inception of this world in which we live?

Rinpoche: The explanations that we see in the sutras are not the same style that we have in modern science. As far as the scientific conjecture about the actual rising of the physical universe is concerned, we are quite accurate. We say so many thousands or millions of years ago, this must have happened, and before that this must have happened, and we've built up one sort of picture of how this world as a planet came into existence. In the sutras we see a slightly different picture. First of all, in general the world of human experience comes into being. Then we see how the defilements emerge and increase. Then because of the need to help beings, the buddhas appear in that world of existence. In this particular eon, which is called the "good kalpa" is a period of time covering the duration of our particular universe. Next described is the gradual solidification of the universe, in terms of it becoming a more and more solidified reality. We see the appearance of just over 1000 Buddhas. For instance the Shakyamuni Buddha who was the last one to come to our world was the fourth in that series of a thousand Buddhas. Then Maitreya will be the fifth, the future Buddha. In that way there will be a thousand Buddhas who come as the world evolves and progresses, sometimes deteriorates. Eventually, after the thousand Buddhas, this physical universe that we know and the beings in it will all disintegrate for a long time. The outer environment of the universe will be dispelled. It's in those sort of

terms the sutras explain the universe, much more than in geophysical terms of how this planet came about.

Glossary of Terms

Abhidharma (Tib. *chö ngön pa*) The Buddhist teachings are often divided into the Tripitaka: the sutras (teachings of the Buddha), the Vinaya (teachings on conduct,) and the Abhidharma which are the analyses of phenomena that exist primarily as a commentarial tradition to the Buddhist teachings. There is not, in fact, an Abhidharma section within the Tibetan collection of the Buddhist teachings.

Amitabha One of the five buddha family deities known as "buddha of boundless light" Usually depicted as red.

arhat (Tib. *dra chom pa*) Accomplished hinayana practitioners who have eliminated the klesha obscurations. They are the fully realized shravakas and pratyekabuddhas.

arya (Tib. *phag pa*) A person who has achieved direct realization of the true nature of reality. This person has achieved the third (path of insight) of the five paths.

Asanga (Tib. *thok me)* A fourth century Indian philosopher who founded the Chittamatra or Yogacara school and wrote the five works of Maitreya which are important mahayana works. Also brother of Vasubhandu.

Avalokiteshvara (Tib. *Chenrezig*) Deity of compassion. Known as patron deity of Tibet and his mantra is OM MANI PADME HUM.

bodhichitta (Tib. *chang chup chi sem*) Literally, the mind of enlightenment. There are two kinds of bodhichitta: absolute bodhichitta, which is completely awakened mind that sees the emptiness of phenomena, and relative bodhichitta which is the aspiration to practice the six paramitas and free all beings from the suffering of samsara.

bodhisattva (Tib. *chang chup sem pa*) Literally, one who exhibits the mind of enlightenment. Also an individual who has committed him or herself to the mahayana path of compassion and the practice of the six paramitas to achieve Buddhahood to free all beings from samsara.

bodhisattva levels (Skt. *bhumi,* Tib. *sa*) The levels or stages a bodhisattva goes through to reach enlightenment. These consist of ten levels in the sutra tradition and thirteen in the tantra tradition.

convention wisdom (Tib. *kun sop*) There are two truths: relative and absolute. Relative truth is the perception of an ordinary (unenlightened) person who sees the world with all his or her projections based on the false belief in ego.

dharani A short sutra containing mystical formulas of knowledge that are symbolic. They are usually longer than mantras.

dharma (Tib. *chö*) This has two main meanings: Any truth such as the sky is blue and secondly, as used in this text, the teachings of the Buddha also called buddhadharma.

dharmachakra (Skt. for "wheel of dharma," Tib. *chö chi khor lo*) The Buddha's teachings correspond to three levels: the hinayana, the mahayana and the vajrayana with each set being one turning of the wheel of dharma.

dharmata (Tib. *chö nyi*) Dharmata is often translated as "suchness" or "the true nature of things" or "things as they are." It is phenomena as it really is or as seen by a completely enlightened being without any distortion or obscuration so one can say it is "reality."

dharmakaya (Tib. *chö ku*) One of the three bodies of Buddhahood. It is enlightenment itself, that is wisdom beyond reference point. See kayas, three.

dhyana meditation (Tib. *sam ten*) The Sanskrit refers to "meditation" but in this context it refers to "mental stability" in relation to shamatha.

emptiness (Skt. *shunyata* Tib. *tong pa nyi*) Also translated as voidness. The Buddha taught in the second turning of the wheel of dharma that external phenomena and the internal phenomena or concept of self or "I" have no real existence and therefore are "empty."

Gampopa (1079-1153 C.E.) One of the main lineage holders of the Kagyu lineage in Tibet. Known also for writing the *Jewel Ornament of Liberation*.

geshe (Tib.) A scholar who has attained a doctorate in Buddhist studies. This usually takes ten to fifteen years to attain.

hinayana (Tib. *tek pa chung wa*) Literally, the "lesser vehicle." The term refers to the first teachings of the Buddha which emphasized the careful examination of mind and its confusion. Also known as the Theravadin path.

jnana (Tib. *ye she*) Enlightened wisdom which is beyond dualistic thought.

kalpa (Tib. *kal pa,* Skt. *yuga*) An eon which lasts in the order of millions of years.

karma (Tib. *lay*) Literally "action." Karma is a universal law that when one does a wholesome action one's circumstances will improve and when one does an unwholesome action negative results will eventually occur from the act.

Karmapa The title of 17 successive incarnations of Dusum Khyenpa who has headed the Karma Kagyu school of Tibetan Buddhism.

Kashyapa Buddha The buddha who lived before the present shakyamuni Buddha.

kayas, three (Tib. *ku sum*) There are three bodies of the Buddha: the nirmanakaya, sambhogakaya and dharmakaya. The dharmakaya, also called the "truth body," is the complete enlightenment or the complete wisdom of the Buddha which is unoriginated wisdom beyond form and manifests in the sambhogakaya and the nirmanakaya. The sambhogakaya, also called the "enjoyment body," manifests only to bodhisattvas. The nirmanakaya, also called the "emanation body," manifests in the world and in this context manifests as the shakyamuni Buddha.

klesha (Tib. *nyön mong*) The emotional obscurations (in contrast to intellectual obscurations) which are also translated as "poisons." The three main kleshas are (passion or desire or attachment), (aggression or anger); and (ignorance or delusion or aversion). The five kleshas are the three above plus pride and (envy or jealousy).

mahamudra (Tib. *cha ja chen po*) Literally means "great seal." As in all phenomena are sealed by the primordial perfect true nature. Lineage began by Saraha (10th century) is a method of examining mind directly.

mahayana (Tib. *tek pa chen po*) Literally, the "great vehicle." These are the teachings of the second turning of the wheel of dharma,

which emphasize shunyata, compassion, the conduct of a bodhisattva.

Maitreya (Tib. *Jampa*) In this work refers to the Bodhisattva Maitreya who lived at the time of the Buddha.

Manjushri (Tib. *Jampalyang*) A meditational deity representing discriminative awareness (prajna) known for knowledge and learning. Usually depicted as holding a sword in the right hand and scripture in the left.

mantrayana Another term for the vajrayana.

mara (Tib. *du*) Difficulties encountered by the practitioner. There are four kinds—skandha-mara which is incorrect view of self, klesha-mara which is being overpowered by negative emotions, màtyu-mara which is death and interrupts spiritual practice, and devaputra-mara which is becoming stuck in the bliss that comes from meditation.

Marpa (1012-1097 C.E.) Marpa was known for being a Tibetan who made three trips to India and brought back many tantric texts including the Six Yogas of Naropa, the Guhyasamaja, and the Chakrasamvara practices. His teacher was Tilopa and he founded the Kagyu lineage in Tibet.

Milarepa (1040-1123 C.E.) Milarepa was a student of Marpa who attained enlightenment in one lifetime. His student Gampopa founded the (Dagpo) Kagyu lineage.

Nagarjuna (Tib. *ludrup)* An Indian scholar in the second century who founded the Madhyamaka philosophical school which emphasized emptiness.

Naropa (956-1040 C.E.) An Indian master who is best known for transmitting many vajrayana teachings to Marpa who took these back to Tibet before the moslem invasion of India.

nirmanakaya (Tib. *tulku*) There are three bodies of the Buddha and the nirmanakaya or "emanation body" manifests in the world and in this context manifests as the Shakyamuni Buddha. See kayas, three.

nirvana (Tib. *nyangenledep*) Literally, "extinguished" in Sanskrit and "transcendence of suffering" in Tibetan. Individuals live in samsara and with spiritual practice can attain a state of enlightenment in which all false ideas and conflicting emotions have been extinguished. This is called nirvana.

paramitas, six (Tib. *parol tu chinpa*) Sanskrit for "perfections" and the Tibetan literally means "gone to the other side." These are the six practices of the mahayana path: Transcendent generosity (dana), transcendent discipline (shila), transcendent patience (kshanti), transcendent exertion (virya), transcendent meditation (dhyana), and transcendent knowledge (prajna). The ten paramitas are these plus aspirational prayer, power, and prajna.

parinirvana When the Buddha died, he did not die an ordinary death to be followed by rebirth so his death is the parinirvana because it was then end of all rebirths because he had achieved complete enlightenment.

prajna (Tib. *she rab*) In Sanskrit it means "perfect knowledge" and can mean wisdom, understanding, or discrimination. Usually it means the wisdom of seeing things from a high (e.g. non-dualistic) point of view.

Prajnaparamita (Tib. *sherab chi parol tu chin pa*) The Buddhist literature outlining the mahayana path and emptiness written mostly around the second century.

pratyekabuddha (Tib. *rang sang gye*) Literally, solitary realizer. A realized hinayana practitioner who has achieved the knowledge of how it is and variety, but who has not committed him or herself to the bodhisattva path of helping all others.

rinpoche Literally, "very precious" and is used as a term of respect for a Tibetan guru.

Shakyamuni Buddha (Tib. *shakya tubpa*) The shakyamuni Buddha, often called the Gautama Buddha, refers to the latest Buddha who lived between 563 and 483 BCE.

samadhi (Tib. *tin ne zin*) Also called meditative absorption or one-pointed meditation, this is the highest form of meditation.

shamatha or tranquility meditation (Tib. *shinay)* This is basic sitting meditation in which one usually follows the breath while observing the workings of the mind while sitting in the cross-legged posture.

sambhogakaya (Tib. *long ku*) There are three bodies of the Buddha and the sambhogakaya, also called the "enjoyment body," is a realm of the dharmakaya which only manifests to bodhisattvas. See the three kayas.

samsara (Tib. *kor wa*) Conditioned existence of ordinary life in which suffering occurs because one still possesses attachment, aggression, and ignorance. It is contrasted to nirvana.

sangha (Tib. *gen dun*) These are the companions on the path. They may be all the persons on the path or the noble sangha, which are the realized ones.

Shantideva (675- 725 C.E.) A great bodhisattva who lived in 7th and 8th century in India known for his two works on the conduct of a bodhisattva.

Saraha One of the eighty-four mahasiddhas of India who was known for his spiritual songs about mahamudra.

shastra (Tib. *tan chö*) The Buddhist teachings are divided into words of the Buddha (the sutras) and the commentaries of others on his works (the shastras).

shravaka (Tib. *nyen thö*) Literally "those who hear" meaning disciples. A type of realized hinayana practitioner (arhat) who has achieved the realization of the nonexistence of personal self.

skillful means (Skt. *upaya,* Tib. *thab*) The skillful means used by enlightened beings to present the dharma taking the person's capabilities and propensities into account.

shunyata (Tib. *tong pa nyi*) Usually translated as voidness or emptiness. The Buddha taught in the second turning of the wheel of dharma that external phenomena and internal phenomena or the concept of self or "I" have no real existence and therefore are "empty."

sutra (Tib. *do*) These are the hinayana and mahayana texts which are the words of the Buddha. These are often contrasted with the tantras which are the Buddha's vajrayana teachings and the shastras which are commentaries on the words of the Buddha.

sutrayana The sutra approach to achieving enlightenment which includes the hinayana and the mahayana.

svabhavikakaya (Tib. *ngo wo nyi kyi ku*) The essence body and refers to the dharmakaya of the Buddha.

tantra (Tib. *gyu)* The texts of the vajrayana practices.

Theravadin (Tib. *neten depa*) Specifically a follower of the Theravada school of the hinayana. Here refers to the first teachings of the Buddha, which emphasized the careful examination of mind and its confusion.

Tilopa (928-1009 C.E.) One of the 84 mahasiddhas who became the guru of Naropa who transmitted his teachings to the Kagyu lineage in Tibet.

Tripitaka (Tib. *de nö sum*) Literally, the three baskets. There are the sutras (the narrative teachings of the Buddha), the Vinaya (a code for monks and nuns) and the Abhidharma (philosophical background of the dharma).

Tushita paradise (Tib. *gan dan*) This is one of the heaven fields of the Buddha. Tushita is in the sambhogakaya and therefore is not located in any place or time.

vajra (Tib. *dorje*) Usually translated "diamond like." This may be an implement held in the hand during certain vajrayana ceremonies, or it can refer to a quality which is so pure and so enduring that it is like a diamond.

Vajrapani (Tib. *Channa Dorje*) A major bodhisattva said to be lord of the mantra and a major protector of Tibetan Buddhism.

vajrayana (Tib. *dorje tek pa*) There are three major traditions of Buddhism (hinayana, mahayana, vajrayana) The vajrayana is based on the tantras and emphasizes the clarity aspect of phenomena and is mainly practiced in Tibet.

Vasubandhu (Tib. *yik nyen*) A great fourth century Indian scholar who was brother of Asanga and wrote the hinayana work the *Abhidharmakosha* explaining the Abhidharma.

Vinaya (Tib. *dul wa*) These are the teachings by the Buddha concerning proper conduct. There are seven main precepts that may be observed by lay persons and 125 or 320 to be observed by monks and nuns.

vipashyana meditation (Tib. *lha tong*) Sanskrit for "insight meditation" This meditation develops insight into the nature of mind. The other main meditation is shamatha meditation.

wheel of dharma (Skt. *dharmachakra*) The Buddha's teachings correspond to three levels: the hinayana, the mahayana and the vajrayana with each set being one turning of the wheel.

yidam (Tib.) A tantric deity that embodies qualities of Buddhahood and is practiced in the vajrayana. Also called a tutelary deity.

Paperback Books by Thrangu Rinpoche

The Three Vehicles of Buddhist Practice. This book gives an overview of the Hinayana, Mahayana, and Vajrayana as it was practiced in Tibet. Boulder: Namo Buddha Publications, 1998.

The Open Door to Emptiness. This book goes through in a easy-to-understand way the arguments made to establish that all phenomena are indeed empty. Vancouver: Karme Thekchen Choling, 1997.

The Practice of Tranquillity and Insight. This book is a practical guide to the two types of meditation that form the core of Buddhist spiritual practice. Ithaca: Snow Lion Publications, 1993.

Buddha Nature. This book is an overview of the whole concept of Buddha-nature as it is presented in Maitreya's *Uttara Tantra.* Kathamandu: Rangjung Yeshe Publications, 1993.

The King of Samadhi. This book is a commentary on the only sutra of the Buddha which discusses mahamudra meditation. It is also the sutra which predicted the coming of Gampopa. Kathmandu: Rangjung Yeshe Publications, 1994.

The Songs of Naropa. This book tells the story of the life of Naropa and analyzes in detail his famous Summary of Mahamudra which lays out the path of mahamudra meditation by the guru whose succession of students went on to found the Kagyu lineage. Kathmandu: Rangjung Yeshe Publications, 1997.

Glossary of Tibetan Terms

Pronounced	Transliterated	English
cha ja chen po	phyag rgya chen po	mahamudra
chang chup chi sem	byang chub kyi sems	bodhichitta
chang chup sem pa	chang chup sems pa	bodhisattva
Channa Dorje	phyag na rdo rje	Vajrapani
Chenrezig	spyan ras gzigs	Avalokiteshvara
chö chi khor lo	chos kyi 'khor lo	dharmacakra
chö	chos	dharma
cho ku	chos sku	dharmakaya
cho ngon pa	chos mngon pa	Abhidharma
cho nyi	chos nyid	dharmata
de no sum	de snod gsum	*Tripitaka*
do	mdo	sutra
dorje	rdo rje	vajra
dorje tek pa	rdo rje theg pa	vajrayana
dra chom pa	dgra bcom pa	arhat
dü	bdud	mara
dul wa	'dul ba	Vinayana
gan dan	dga' ldan	Tushita
gen dun	gen 'dun	sangha
geshe	dge bshes	scholar
gom	sgom	meditation
gyu	rgyud	tantra
Jamapalyang	'jam dpal dbyangs	Manjushri
Jampa	byams pa	Maitreya
kal pa	bskal pa	kalpa
kor wa	'khor ba	samsara
ku sum	sku gsum	kayas three
kun sop	kun rdzob	relative wisdom
lay	las	karma
lhag tong	lhag mthong	vipashyana
long ku	longs sku	sambhogakaya
ludrup	klu sgrub	Nagarjuna

neten depa	gnas brtan pa' sde pa ?	Theravada
ngo wo nyi kyi ku	ngo bo nyid kyi sku	svabhavikakaya
nyangenledep	mya ngan las 'das pa	nirvana
nyen tho	nyan thos	shravaka
nyon mong	nyon mongs	klesha
parol tu chinpa	pha rol tu phyin pa	paramitas, six
phag pa	'phags pa	arya
rang sang gye	rang sangs rgyas	pratyekabuddha
rinpoche	rin po che	"precious one"
sa	sa	Bodhis. levels
sang nga	gsang sngags	secret mantra
shakya tubpa	shakya thub pa	Shakyamuni
sherab	shes ran	prajna
sherab chi parol tu chin pa	shes rab pha rol tu phyin pa	Prajnapara.
shinay	zhi gnas	shamatha
tan cho	bstan bcos	shastra
tek pa chen po	theg pa chen po	mahayana
tek pa chung wa	theg pa chung ba	hinayana
thab	thabs	skillful means
thok me	thogs med	Asanga
tin ne zin	ting nge 'dzin	samadhi
tong pa nyi	strong pa nyid	emptiness
tulku	sprul sku	nirmanakaya
yeshe	ye shes	jnana
yidam	yi dam	yidam

Endnotes

by

Clark Johnson, Ph. D. (unless otherwise noted)

1. This is actually an epithet for Buddhahood.
2. Technical words are italicized the first time to alert the reader that they may be found in the Glossary.
3. This is shunyata which we prefer to translate as "emptiness" because it is not completely void because it also contains luminosity (Tib. *salwa*). We reserve "voidness" for something that is completely empty.
4. The sixteen aspects of empty are explained in the *Madhyamakavatara* and are the emptiness of: inner, outer, inner and outer, the great, the ultimate, the produced, the unproduced, beyond extremes, the beginningless, endless, the no rejected, nature, all phenomena, definitions, the unobservable, and the emptiness of emptiness.
5. In Buddhist philosophy there is *the way things appear* which is the way ordinary (that is unenlightened) beings perceive phenomena and *the way things are* which is a non-deluded, enlightened view of phenomena.
6. The Pali Text Society has published many of these teachings of the Buddha and these run well over 50 volumes.
7. There is a long debate about who wrote the Five Works of Maitreya. Western scholars who do not believe in *hidden treasure* or *terma* transmissions tend to say that Asanga wrote the five works of Maitreya and that he had a teacher called Maitreyanatha. However, in our present day, Trungpa Rinpoche received the Shambhala teachings directly from Padmasambhava in a matter of a few hours and Dujom Rinpoche received numerous teachings "from the sky," that is the sambhogakaya. So if these transmissions could occur in modern times, why could they not have occurred in the 4th century? Thrangu Rinpoche who has studied and contemplated these teachings for half a century has said that these teachings definitely came from Maitreya, not Asanga. Asanga just wrote the transmissions down.

8. The Homage appears in the Tibetan text, but not in the Sanskrit version. This is one of the few divergences between the Tibetan version which appears in the Tengyur and the existent Sanskrit versions we have of this text.
9. The five main branches of learning are the five areas to be studied to develop our knowledge as Buddhists. The first branch is the most important and is called "inner knowledge" (Tib. *nang gir rig pa*). It deals with how to meditate and practice so one can realize the universal essence. This branch is the study of the meaning contained in all of the three collections of the Buddha's works which will bring us to that realization. The second branch is mainly concerned with the terminology which is used in these three collections of the Buddha works. It is the study of terms and the use of language in order to convey these ideas. The third branch is the study of logic and shows us what is valid cognition and what isn't. It shows us what is a valid way of thinking and what is an illogical. The last two branches are mainly concerned with learning how to help others. The fourth branch is the study of arts and crafts so one is capable and skillful in doing things to help others. The fifth branch is mainly concerned with the art of healing the physical ills of others.
   --Thrangu Rinpoche
10. Buddhism, unlike conventional or scientific thought, believes that the external world that we perceive as solid objects is an illusion..
11. We have used small caps to show the reader where the commentary is in relation to the outline. A few separate sections which are not part of the outline are headings that are not in small caps. In order to make the text clearer, we have changed some of the heading to reflect the material they cover, not the literal headings in Tibetan. Their literal headings are given in the Summary of Topics at the beginning of this book.
12. Usually, we talk about the six paramitas, but the mahayana (such in the *Madhyamakavatara* teaches ten paramitas.
13. Speech here means more than talking, obviously, because what the Buddha said has been preserved in writing and so it continues on to this present day.
14. See suggested footnote at bottom of page 30.

15. For example, a fine statue of a buddha or a nice house or some magnificent tree outside one's house, or even a loving relationship will eventually break and disintegrate and that loss will cause much unhappiness or what is known as the "unhappiness of change."
16. This is true giving in which there is no person giving, nothing given, and no one receiving the gift. "No one giving" means the person giving doesn't expect anything in return. The gift given means to be something that truly benefits the receiver and person given means xxx.
17. The last instant of highest worldly dharma and the first instant of the path of insight happen in one meditation session.
18. In fact these were the last words of the Buddha.
19. Lobsang P. Lhalungpa. *The Life of Milarepa*. London: Paladin, 1979.
20.
21. The three kinds of suffering are: x,y,z
22. The literal word is listening, but Rinpoche has said that in this day and age, this means "studying" since much of the dharma is written down.
23. For example, the *King of Samadhi Sutra* predicted the appearance of Gampopa. (see Thrangu Rinpoche, The King of Samadhi, Rangjung Yeshe Press)
24. The literal translation of what Rinpoche said is "hearing" which in traditional times meant sitting and listening to the lama talk about the subject, but in modern times studying is probably more appropriate because we often sit down with a book and try to understand it.
25. The Tibetan word for this treating everyone equally or in the same manner is *nyam pa* which has the meaning "like, alike, same, equal" and we use "equality" which seems to be the closest to what is meant rather than "equality" or "sameness."
26. In some texts this particular point, if you're following the Tibetan text, is mistakenly written *bstan pa* meaning teachings. This is wrong, it must be *brtan pa*, that which is firm and stable.
    -- Thrangu Rinpoche
27. This is the traditional cosmology of India and Tibet in which the center of the world is Mt. Meru and it is surrounded by four

continents (east, south, west, and north) of which our world is actually the western continent. This is actually visualized in the mandala offering practice of ngöndro practice.

28. Footnote on outside reality etc.
29. The Tibetan word used is *trenpa* which can mean "memory," "recollection," or "mindfulness." It is often translated as mindfulness because mindfulness, is being aware of something all the time without becoming distracted.
    "Actually the word in Tibetan is more than recollection. It's *rjes su dran pa* which means to recall but also to recall in such a way that one follows up on what one recalls." Thrangu Rinpoche.
30. The Sanskrit is sambhogakaya and this literally means "enjoyment body" which is the most common translation of this word. However, enjoyment body doesn't really convey and emanation of the Buddha in the purest realms so Thrangu Rinpoche has chosen to explain this word using the Tibetan which seems closer to its actual meaning.

Bibliography

The Sutras

The Heart Sutra. This is a sutra by the Buddha which is a condensation of the Prajnaparamita and this sutra is chanted daily in almost all mahayana centers.

Perfection of Wisdom Literature. There is a Prajna-paramita text of 100,000 verses, a text of 25,000 verses, a text of 8,000 verses, the Heart sutra of only a few verses right on down to a single seed syllable AH. The *Perfection of Wisdom* in 8,000 verses (Skt. *ashtasahasrika-prajna-paramita-sutra,* Tib. *'phag pa shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa brgyad stron pa'i mdo*) has been translated by Edward Conze. *The Large Sutra on Perfect Wisdom.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975.

Diamond Sutra.

Other Works

Maitreya and Asanga *The Uttara Tantra*
(Skt. *Mahayanasutrantrashastra,* Tib. *theg pa chen po rgyud bla ma' i bstan bcos,* Pron. *Gyu Lama*) A translation of the root text and a commentary by Thrangu Rinpoche can be found in *The Uttara Tantra: A Treatise on Buddha-nature.* Boulder: Namo Buddha Publications, 1999.
Differentiation of the Middle Way from the Extremes (Skt. *Madhyantavibhanga,* Tib. *dbu mtha' rnam 'byed*)
Ornament for the Mahayana Sutras (Skt. *Mahayanasutralamkara*) (Tib. *theg pa chen po' i mdo sde' i rgyan*)
Ornament of Clear Realization (Skt. Abhisamayalankara) (Tib. mnog rtogs rgyan)

Gampopa
The Jewel Ornament of Liberation (Tib. *thar pa rgyan*)
A translation by Herbert Guenther as *The Jewel Ornament of Liberation.* Berkeley: Shambhala, 1971 in a very difficult translation and a translation by Ken and Katia Holmes in called *Jewels of*

Dharma: Jewels of Freedom is a very loose translation. London: Altea Publications, 1995. An excellent translation by Khenpo Konchog Gyaltsen Rinpoche is *The Jewel Ornament of Liberation*. Ithaca, New York: Snow Lion Pubications, 1998.

Vasubandhu
Abhidharmakosha (Tib. *mngon pa mdzod*)

The Ornament of Clear Realization (The Abhisamayalamkara)

Maitreya, the next Buddha, transmitted five great works to Asanga in the 4th century of our era. These books became the foundation of the Mind-only or Chittamatra school. Because these five works of Maitreya are so important in understanding the mahayana path, Thrangu Rinpoche has given a commentary on four of these five great works.

The *Ornament of Clear Realization* or *Abhisamayalamkara*, as it is known in Sanskrit, is studied extensively in Kagyu colleges because it gives a commentary on the vast Prajnaparamita literature. The Prajnaparamita is the foundation for the Mahayana teachings and the study of emptiness. Rather than discussing emptiness directly, the *Clear Ornament* takes what Thrangu Rinpoche calls "the indirect approach" in contrast to Nagarjuna's "direct approach" to teaching emptiness by engaging in an extensive explanation of the five paths. These five paths are actually stages of enlightenment and they form a map of what we as Buddhist practitioners need to master to achieve realization

Described in this text, first of all, are the ten causal conditions necessary for achieving enlightenment. Next the five paths beginning with the path of accumulation of the Hinayana and going through to the path of no-more-learning of an enlightened Buddha are described in detail giving their qualities, conditions, and outcomes. In this commentary, Thrangu Rinpoche is able to explain the significance of each of the famous 70 topics of the *Abhisamayalamkara*.

Namo Buddha Publications